PIECED QUILTS OF ONTARIO

Dorothy K. Burnham

Royal Ontario Museum

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PIECED QUILTS OF ONTARIO

Text and Diagrams by Dorothy K. Burnham

Textile Department
Royal Ontario Museum
Toronto

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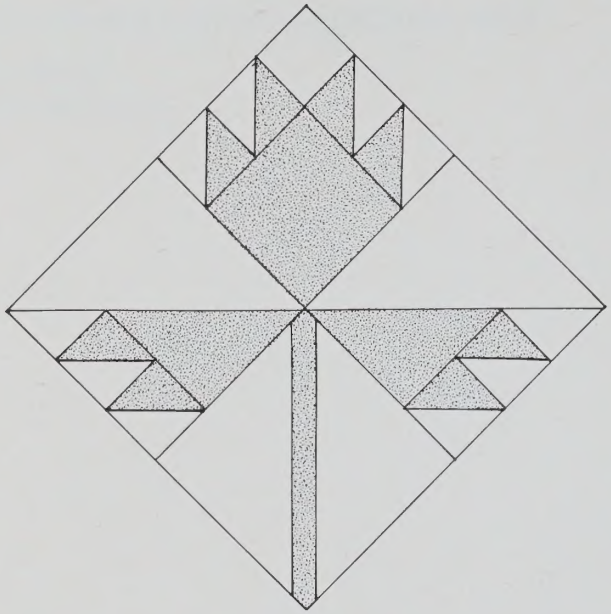
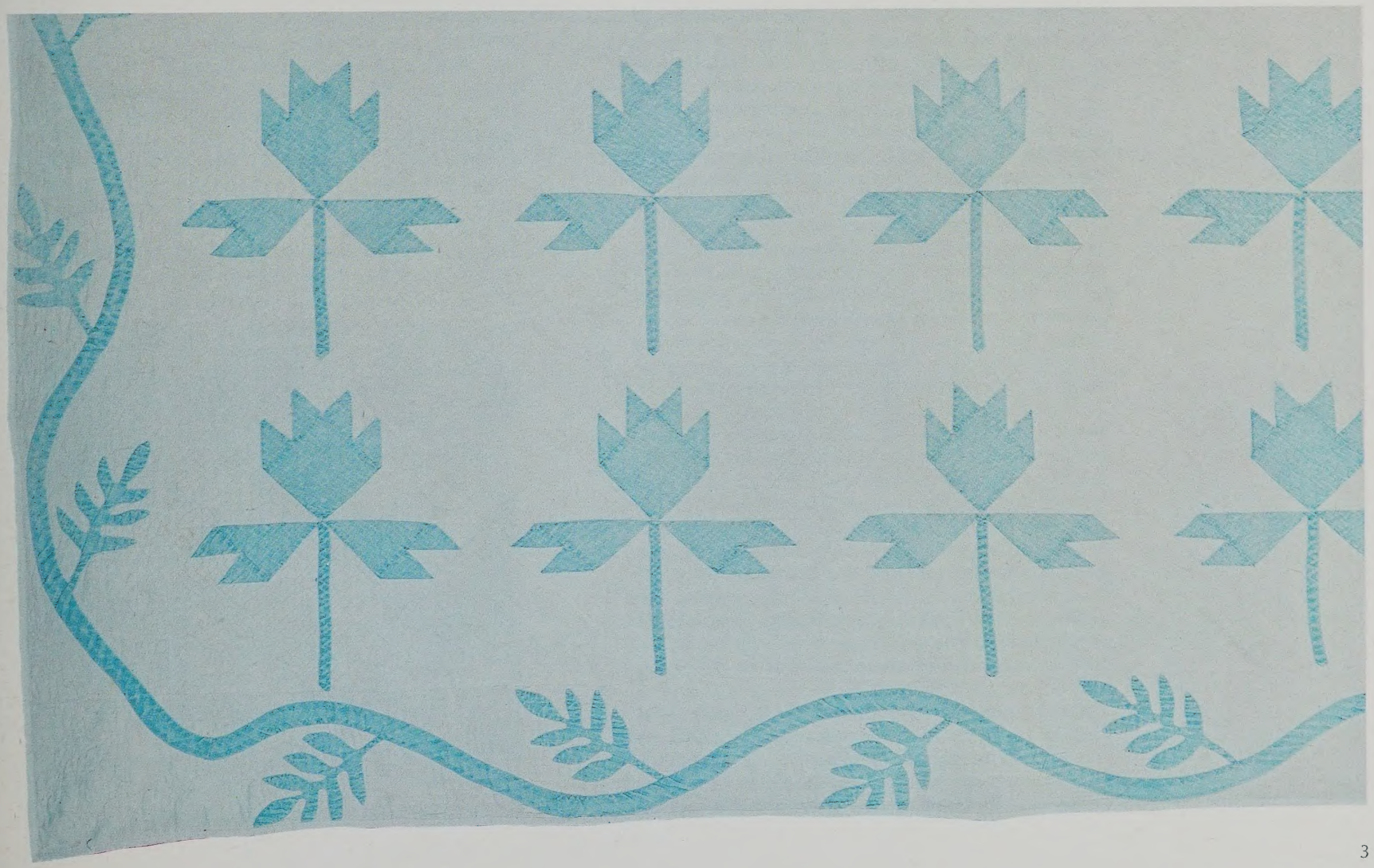


Detail of Diagram 18

NOTE: In the quilts described sewing is by hand unless otherwise noted. The pieces are all shown *without a seam allowance*. Most diagrams are quarter size, the largest designs are shown one-eighth size, and two patterns with very small pieces are actual size. Although the Museum is now using metric measure, it was thought best to give the measurements of the diagrams in inches, as these quilts were made when inches were the only standard.

Detail of Quilt 18

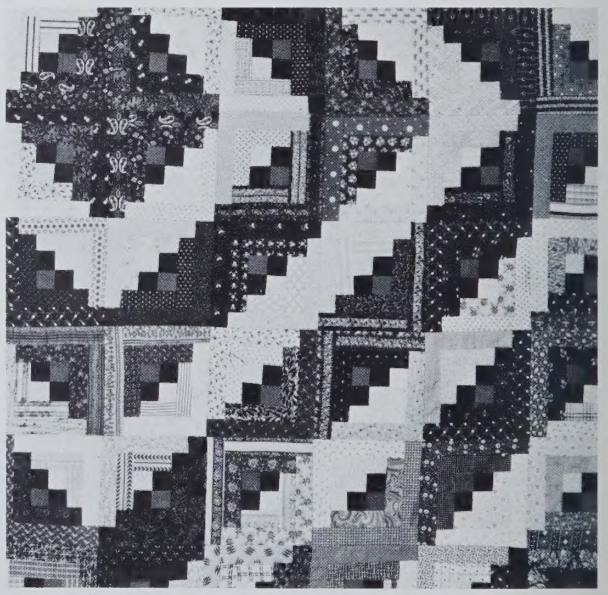


Introduction

Few mediums of expression allow the making of something useful and beautiful while requiring no specialized training and only the simplest of household tools. We cannot know whether use, beauty, or simplicity of production has contributed most to the persistent popularity of quilt-making from the early days of Canada's settlement until the present time. Probably all practical considerations are surpassed by a nebulous quality, the glow that comes from creating something satisfying out of virtually nothing. Of course not all quilts are beautiful, some are far from useful, and many in spite of the simplicity of the medium are overly elaborate and must have required almost superhuman endurance to produce. There are as many varieties of quilts as there are of people, and something of the maker's individuality always comes through in the placing of one piece of material next to another, the balance of colour achieved, and the play between the obvious pattern and the subtle third dimension given by the padding and quilting. It is this sense of personal communication that lies behind the unique appeal of a collection of old quilts. There is a bond between those who work in the same medium, and that bond can span time, allowing us today to share the joy of the worker of many years ago, who, by combining a good natural sense of design with excellent workmanship, sometimes made magic from the scrap bag.

Many people at the present time are startled and excited that experts have discovered an important art form in the quilts of the past. Quilt-makers have known all along that beauty could grow under their hands. That is why even in the making of the most utilitarian quilt, to answer an urgent need for warm bedding, great care was taken in the placing of the patches. It might not always have been "Art" but it most certainly was skilled engineering, and the results could be very satisfying aesthetically.

Over the Royal Ontario Museum's sixty years of existence, an excellent collection of quilts has been slowly built up, representing the traditions of Canada, the United States, and the British Isles. These items are supplemented by examples of quilting techniques from many other parts of the world. The collection has been gathered largely



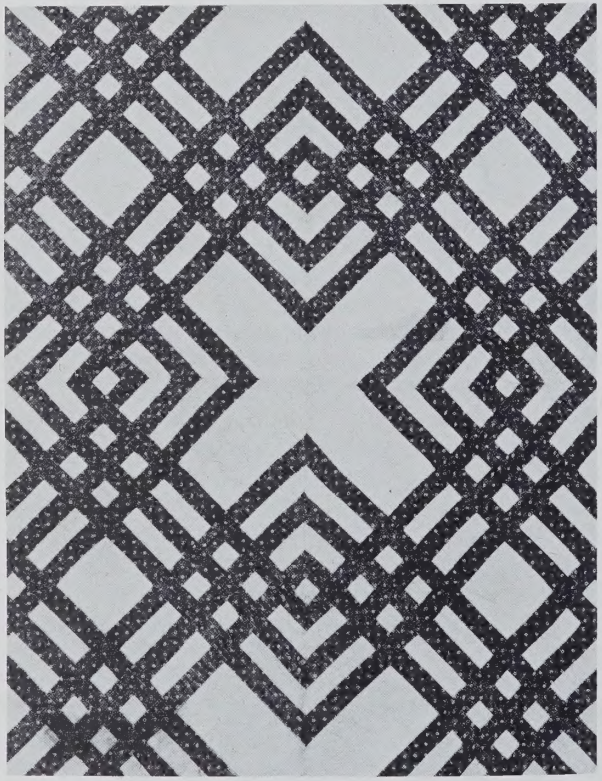
Detail of Quilt 4

through the generosity of private donors to whom we are deeply grateful. Many have given their treasures to the Museum because they felt responsible for their preservation and unable to carry out this responsibility personally. Many have also had the generous desire to share the beauty and interest of their possessions with others. The Museum can give the care that helps to ensure the preservation, but the sharing presents more problems. With large and important collections of world-wide scope and with very limited gallery space, the Textile Department can display considerably less than one per cent of its collections at any one time. Through special exhibitions and change of displays, many items in our enormous holdings get their turn in the galleries and are enjoyed by visitors. However, for the visitor with one overwhelming interest, such as quilts, this can be a teasing rather than a satisfying experience. Files of notes and photographs are available for the student, but inadequate facilities and the fragility of the material hamper ready reference to the collections themselves. In time this situation will be rectified so that all material, whether on exhibition or in reserve, will be equally accessible. In the meantime we intend to publish information about the quilt collection in several instalments, of which this is the first.

So many books have been and are being written about quilts, their history, and their making that there is no need for still another. This small publication will simply place individual quilts in their historical context and provide photographs and diagrams so that the reader may appreciate the ingenuity of the construction and reproduce it. The limited scope covers only one aspect of the collection, pieced quilts made in Ontario. These are not the most dramatic quilts but they are the practical ones for everyday use. A nineteenth-century bride would create one appliquéd quilt for her trousseau but she would be expected to have a dozen faces of the pieced variety all ready for backing and quilting by the time she reached marriageable age. Twelve-to-one may have been the proportion in production, but it is not the proportion of survival. Because the appliquéd patterns were special, they were reserved for best use only, and as a result almost as many of those have survived as of the more numerous utilitarian variety. There is great variety in the group described here: quilts made from patches of handwoven woollen materials, quilts produced from the family scrap bag, quilts whose makers had the means to acquire several yards of new, specially selected cottons, and two very sophisticated quilts made from the finest dress silks. These quilts span as wide a social spectrum as did nineteenth-century Ontario life itself.

All the older quilts are handsewn, and the quality of the sewing is often an inspiration. Until the middle of the last century the standard of handsewing taught to the young was very high, and is evident in the accuracy of the piecing and the fine quilting of this early period. As the century progressed this standard tended to decline, but many late nineteenth-century quilts were still remarkably well sewn. About 1875 the sewing machine started to make an impact on quilt-making, often with excellent results. It must be remembered that the acquisition of a sewing

machine was a special achievement, and it was used carefully to produce a firmer, better product, not just to run up a quilt face in a hurry. It is undoubtedly better for a quilt to be pieced with accuracy and precision by machine than to be sleazily put together by hand, and the machine was often used in combination with handsewing to produce a better result than could be achieved by either hand or machine alone.

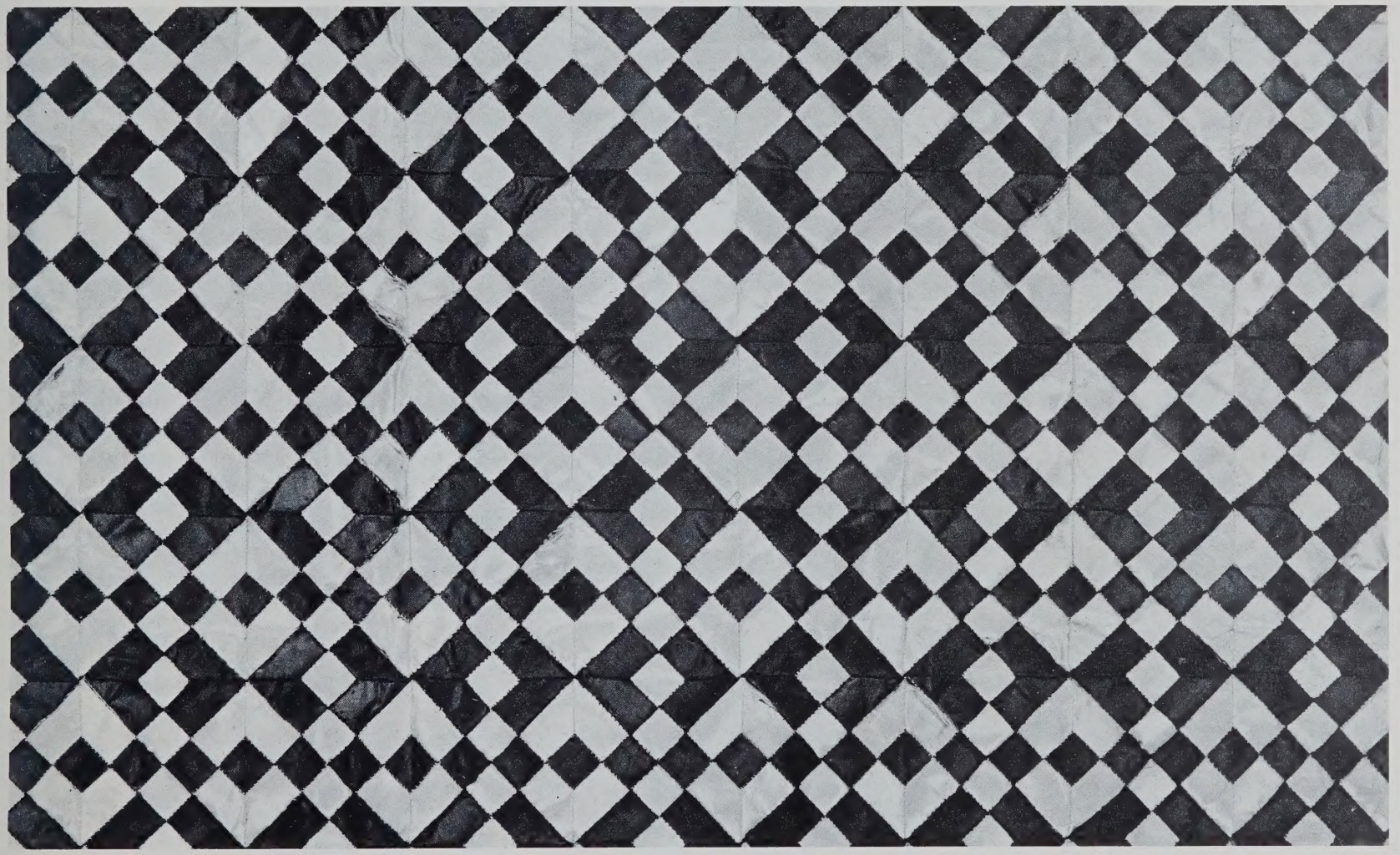


Detail of Quilt 8

Wool quilts are usually heavily padded with carded wool and often backed with old hand-woven blankets to make a very warm covering. Although it is probable that many cotton quilts were also warmly padded, few of these have survived, and most in the collection have just enough padding to give body to the quilting but little warmth. Lightness allowed finer stitching and hence more elaborate quilting, which could be used either to reinforce the strength of the design by repeating the lines of the piecing or to provide a contrast by acting in opposition to the more obvious pattern. Much of the overall feeling of quality in a quilt depends on the competence shown in the fine hand stitching of the quilting.

The intense observation required to make these diagrams has led to a keen appreciation of the sheer cleverness of the patterns. No knowledge of mathematics, no protractors, not even rulers were necessary. A pencil, a straight edge, a circle provided by tracing round a cup or plate, a right angle which could be taken from the corner of a book, and paper to fold and cut were the only things needed to make the master pattern. Yet the resulting intricacies would do credit to a master of geometry. Some of the old quilts are undoubtedly "Art", but even the humblest can be looked on as a feat of engineering, building a solid whole from many small fragments.

Detail of Quilt 10



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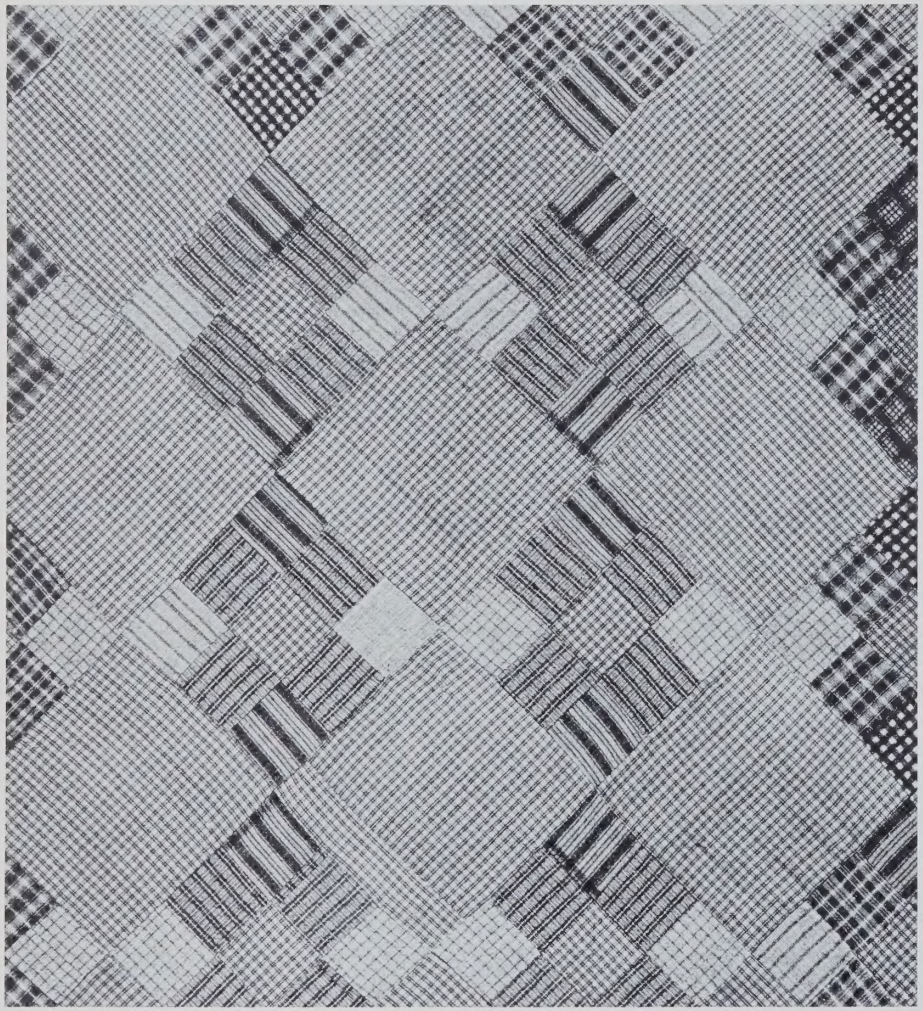
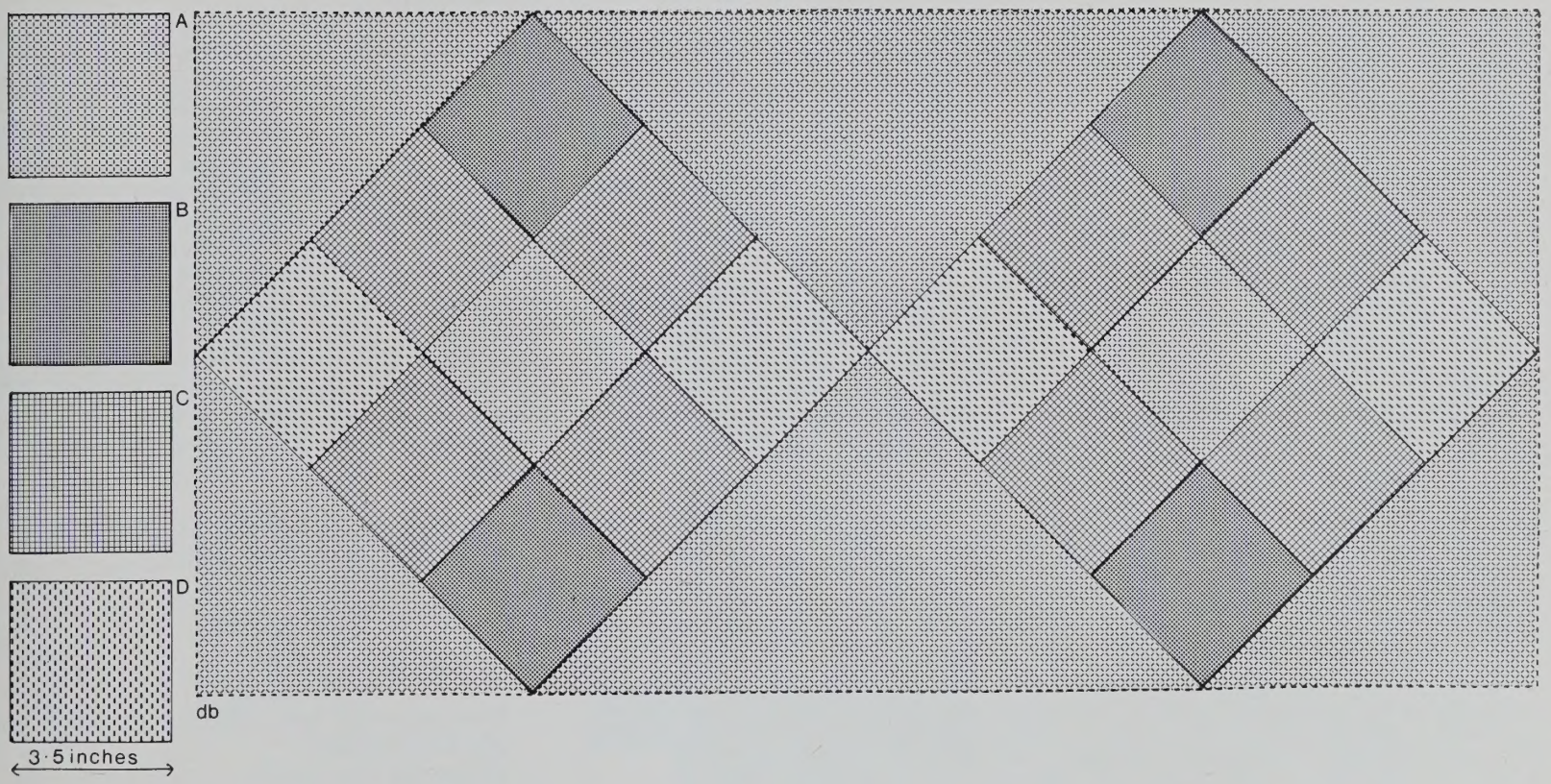
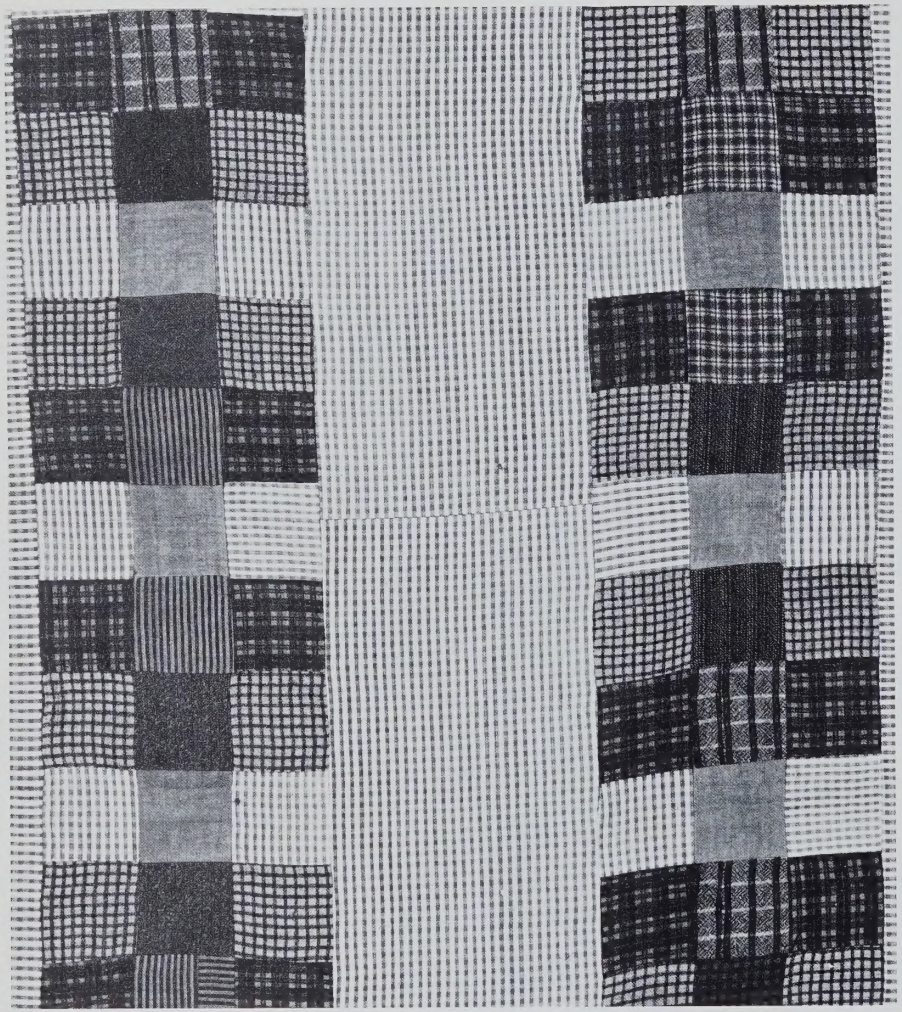


This quilt is in one of the simplest and most basic patterns, the "Nine Patch". It consists of a block made of three rows of three small squares alternating with a plain block, set either straight or on the diagonal. The blocks can be quite tiny, or bold, as here. The use of colour was sometimes haphazard but usually a balanced arrangement was attained by a careful placing of the available patches. This quilt, made near Acton in Halton County between about 1850 and 1875, is entirely of handspun and handwoven woollen materials. Its main colour, a bright red, makes it an unusually cheerful example of the basic winter quilt. Many battered remnants of this type survive, but few are in good condition. They are a valuable source of information on the range and type of locally handwoven materials used for pioneer clothing. When garments wore out they were turned and used again, then later cut down and remade for children's clothes; eventually the pieces that still had wear in them finished their life of usefulness in these heavy quilts. This one is backed with plain handwoven material and has wool padding and just enough quilting to hold the two layers together.

Gift of Mrs. Keith Comfort. 957.316.
L. 205 cm (81"). W. 160 cm (63").



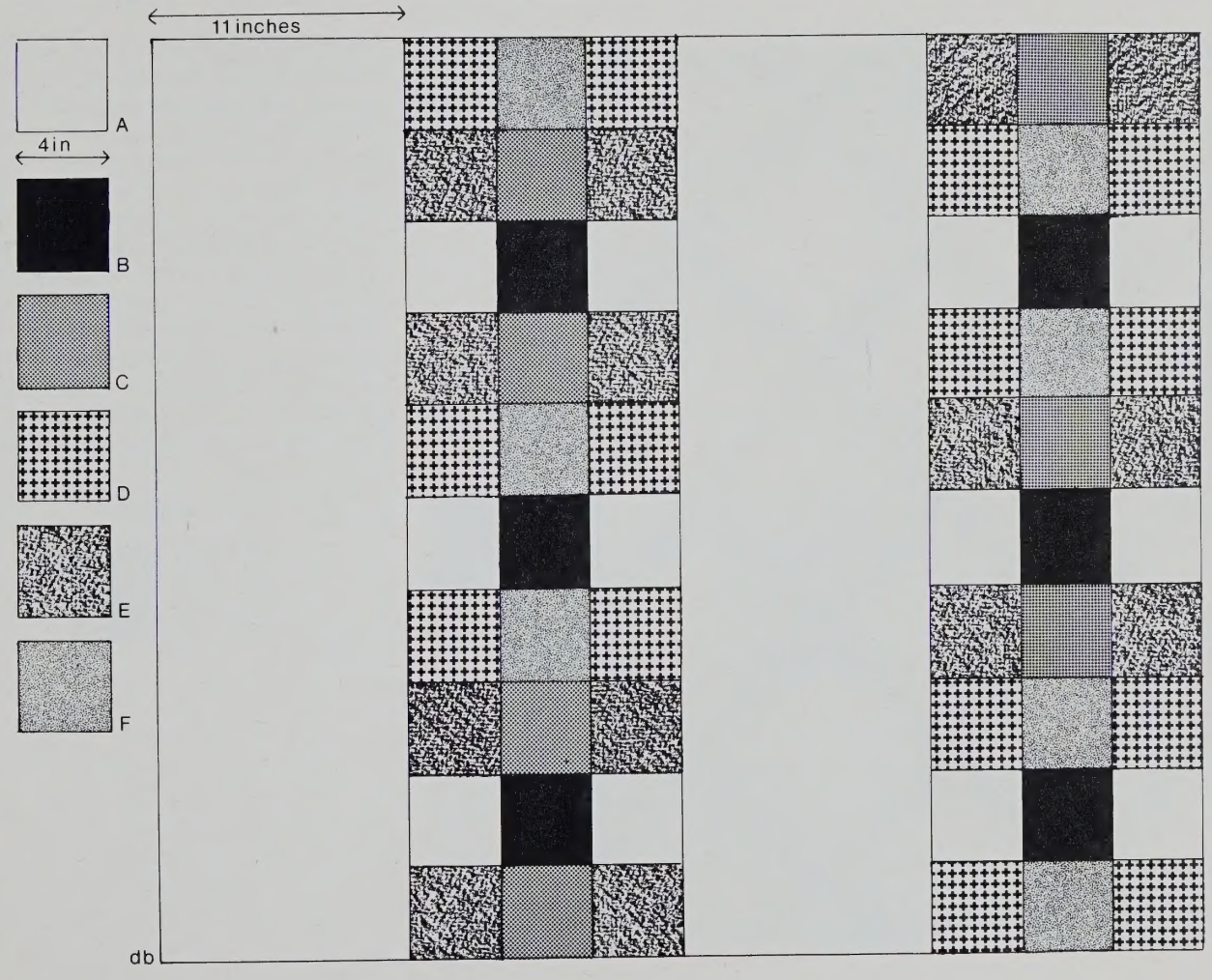
A. Bright red ground with a small double-line check in dark indigo blue.
B. In some blocks a simple red and dark indigo blue check, in others a complex stripe and check combination in reds and blues.
C. Beige ground with red and blue cross check.
D. Checked materials which vary from block to block.



This section of quilt face, probably made in Waterloo County about 1875, shows a simple arrangement of squares of material, most of which are handspun, handwoven wool tabby with a few commercially woven dark twill suitings. It has been a strictly utilitarian piece made from scraps, but the great care and imagination used in the layout have produced a most interesting colour rhythm. The reds are opposite each other in the two rows, but the pieces that surround them are offset. The background material has probably been saved from a winter sheet, while the other pieces come from clothing. Originally it was probably backed with handwoven material and padded with wool, with the layers tied together rather than quilted. The joining of the pieces has been done by machine.

Gift of Miss Adelaide Lash Miller. 961.165.2.
L. 190 cm (75″). W. 153 cm (60.5″).

A. Blue and white tabby check with cotton warp and woollen welt.
B. Bright red wool tabby.
C. Varying dark wool twill suiting materials, mostly commercial.
D. Blue and red checked wool tabby.
E. Checked wool tabby with a pinkish ground.
F. These patches vary, sometimes a check, sometimes a stripe, but always lighter in tone than C.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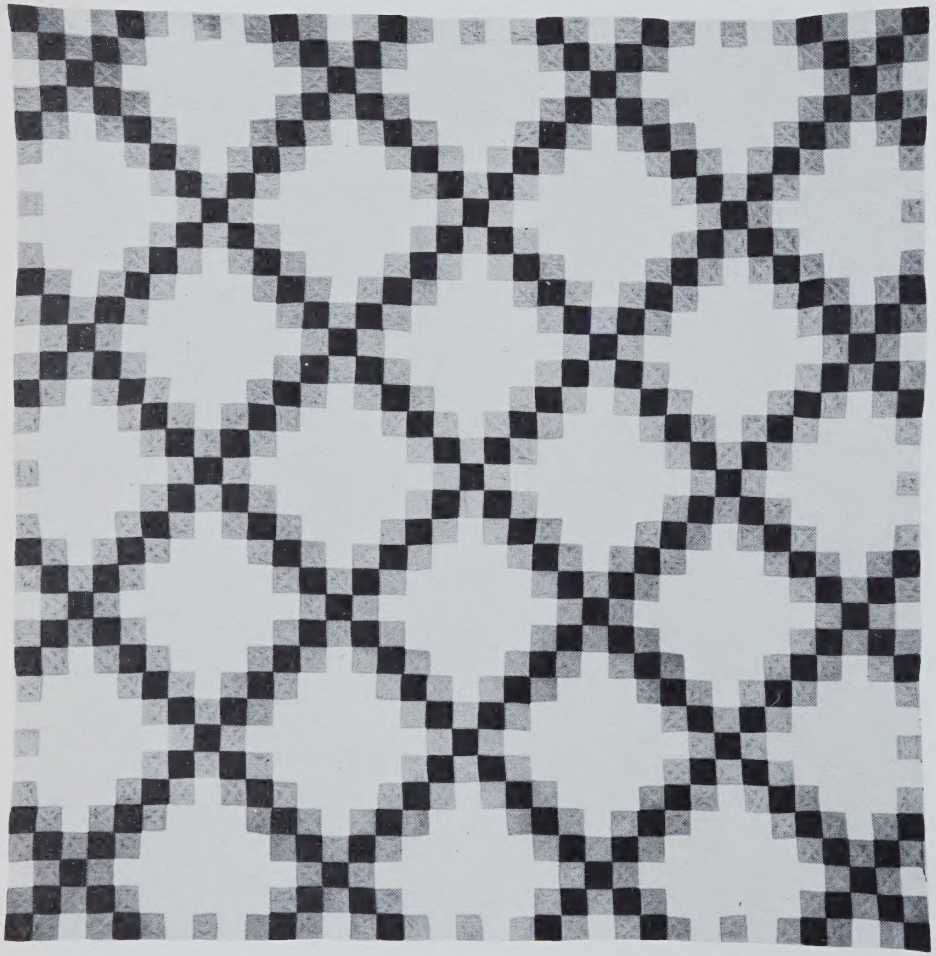
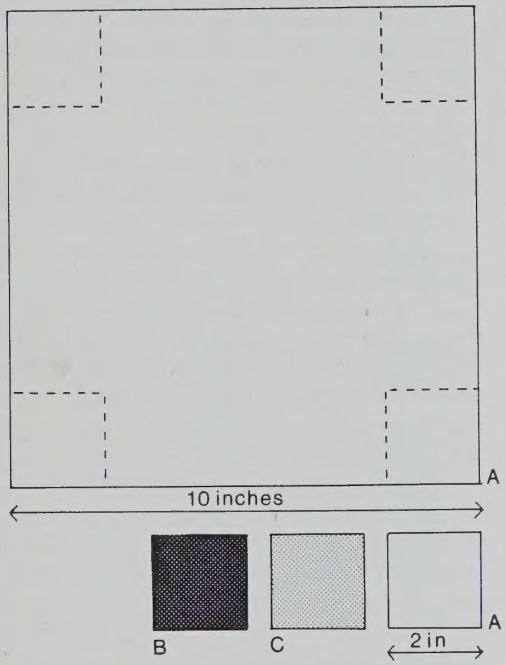
3



This quilt was made in Ridgeway, Welland County, late in the nineteenth century. It shows an interesting and popular extension of the basic "Nine Patch" pattern, called "Irish Chain". The checkerboard block consists of five rows of five, rather than three rows of three, small squares, and in this example is made in three colours. With the simple addition of one small square appliquéd to each corner of the intervening plain block, a diagonal lattice covering the quilt is produced. Purists might consider this use of appliqué in the making of a pieced quilt cheating, but our grandmothers didn't worry about such minor matters. If the result they wanted could be achieved one way more easily than another they took the easy efficient way.

964.135.1

210 cm (83") square.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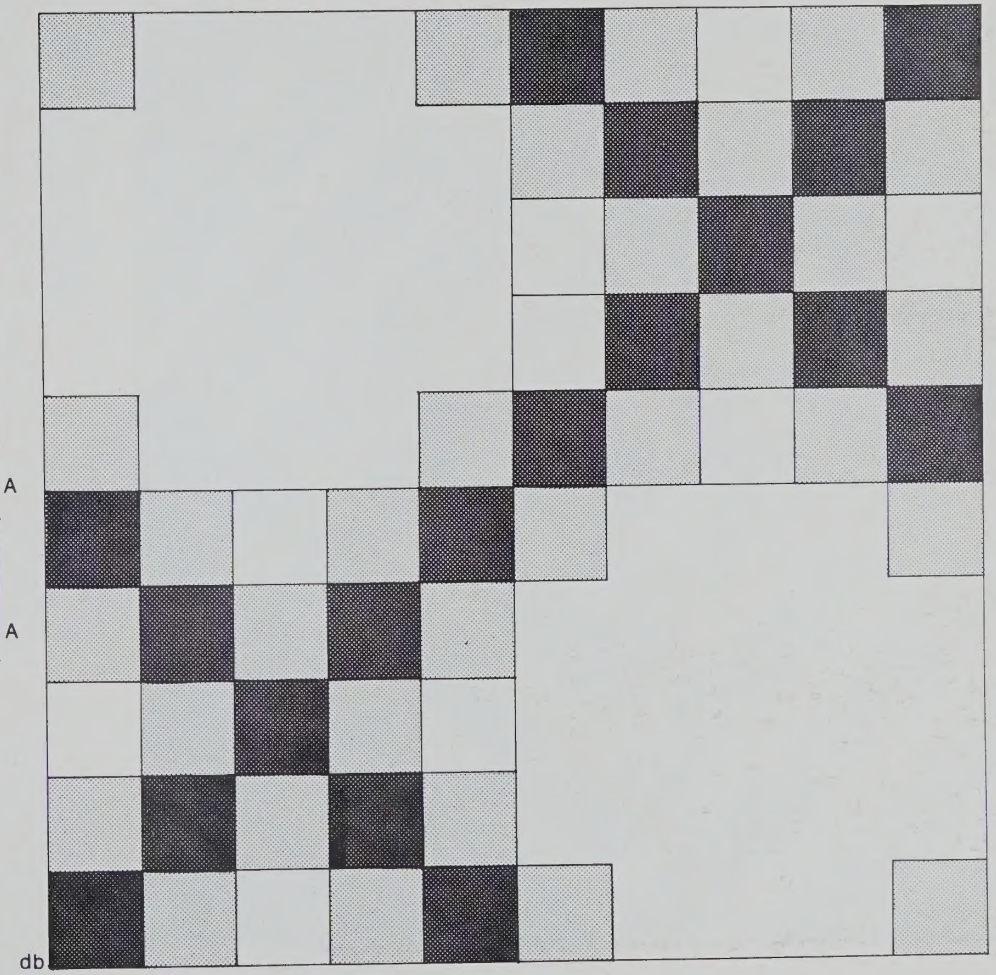
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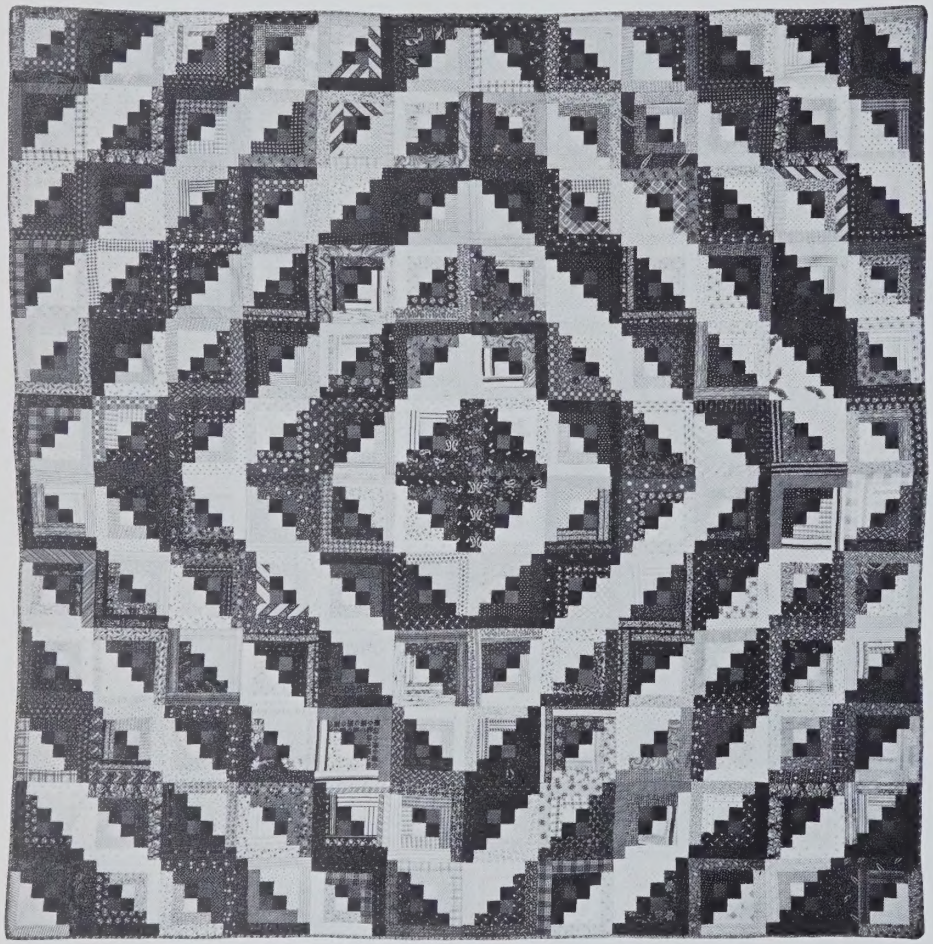
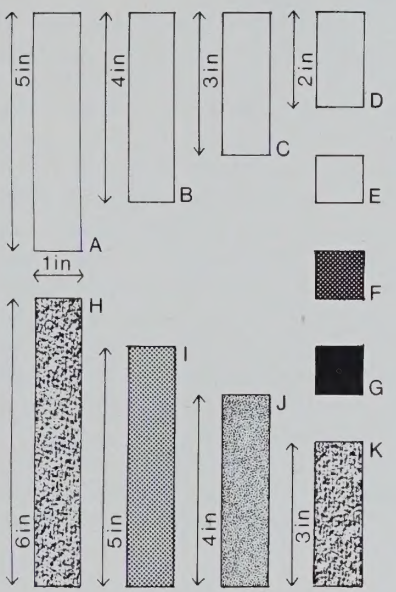
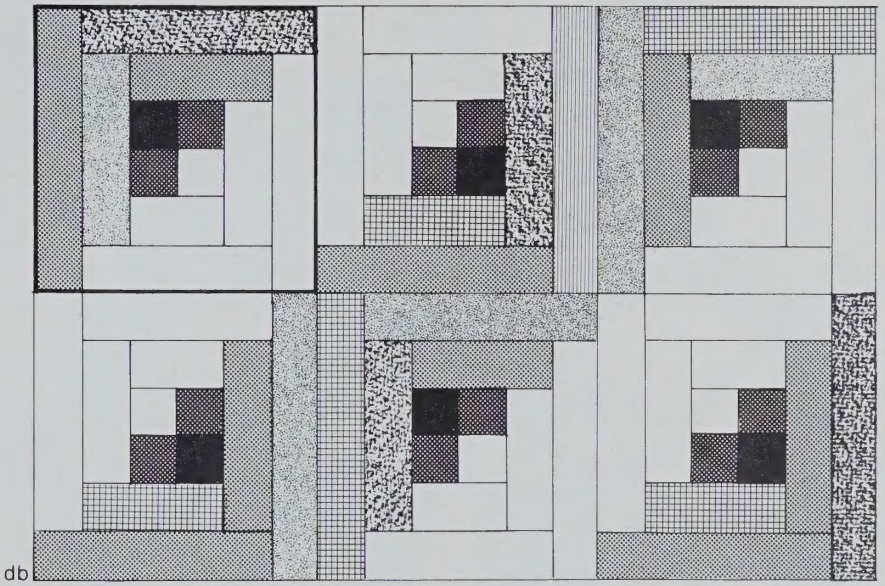


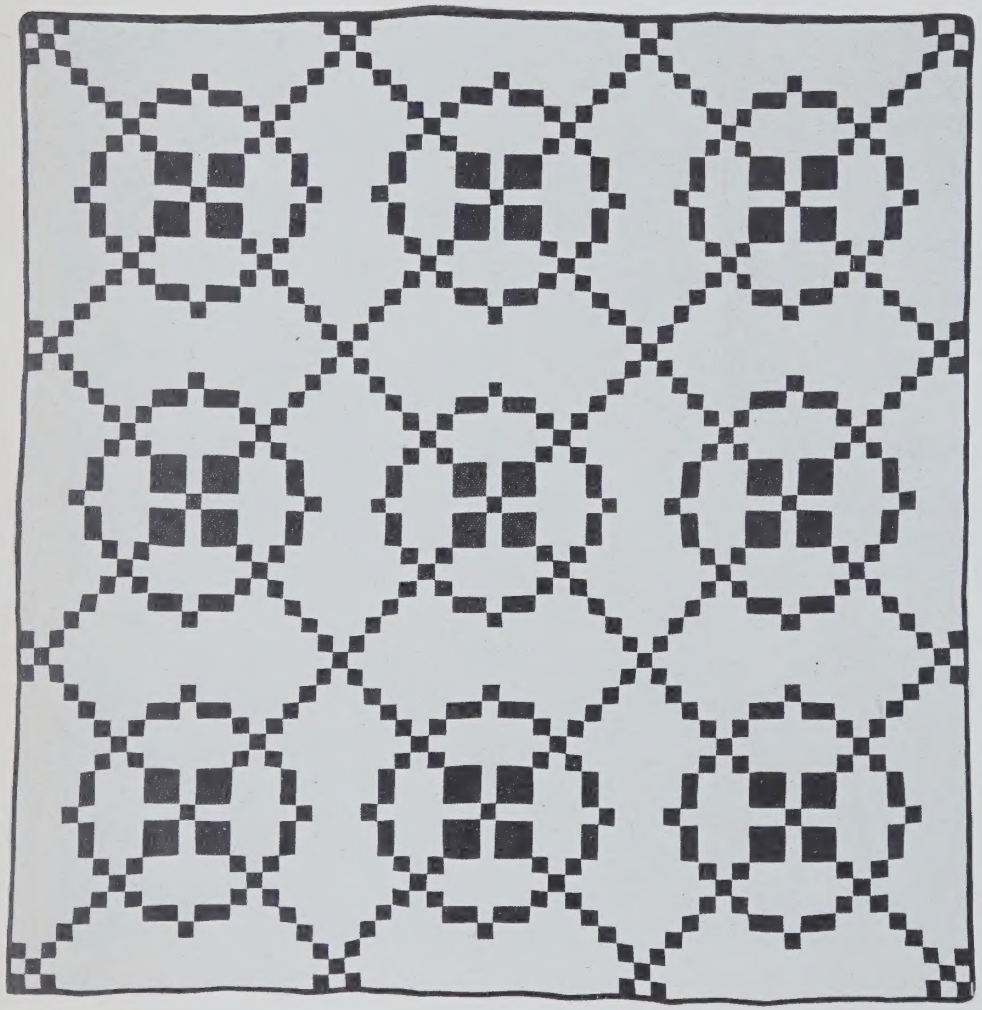
This quilt was made by Charlotte Lloyd near Belleville, Hastings County, about 1875. It has the appearance of the "log cabin" type of construction, where strips or "logs" are folded one over another to build an effective pattern quickly with quite loose running stitches. But the quilt has in fact been firmly put together with fine seams as in the piecing of a normal quilt. On the diagram the individual block has been heavily outlined to show the unit of construction. Four squares, one red, two green, and one light in colour, are always put together to start the block; then strips are added, each one a section longer than the previous one. These strips alternate between two light-coloured ones, then two dark and again two light, then two dark. These blocks are then put together so that light and dark strips form the large pattern of concentric squares with a regular rhythm punctuated by the repetition of the red and green blocks at the centre of each unit. The pieces for the blocks have been joined by fine handsewing and the blocks have been firmly joined by machine.

Gift of Mr. J. W. Pitman. 969.139.2.
188 cm (74") square.



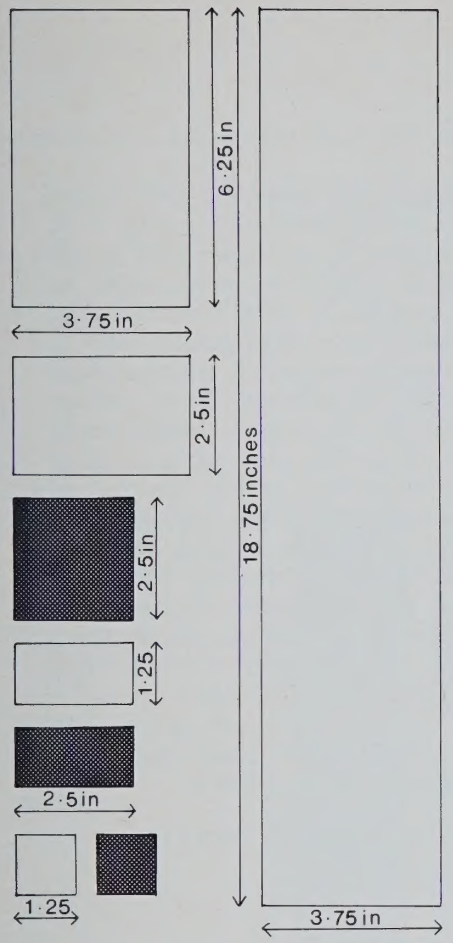


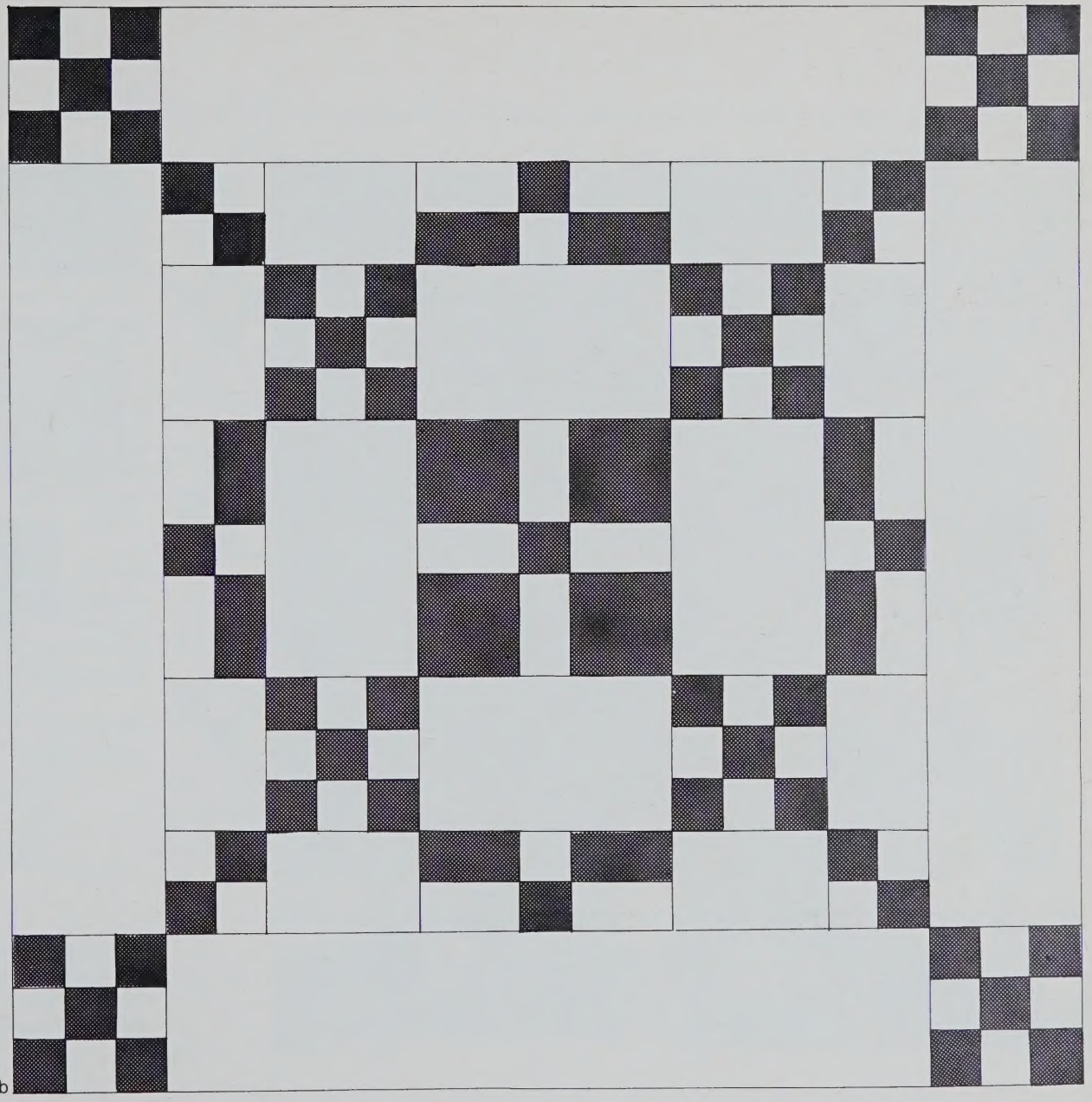
A.–E. Varied light plain and printed cottons.
F. Always plain strong green cotton.
G. Always bright red cotton.
H.–K. Varied dark plain and printed cottons.



This quilt, made about 1850 near Napanee, Lennox and Addington counties, by Susannah (Vandebogart) Fretz, has a design reminiscent of a handwoven doublecloth coverlet. These very special and much desired coverlets were almost always woven in white and indigo blue, and when this quilt pattern occurs it always seems to be in dark blue cotton on a white ground suggesting that the origin of the design is indeed a doublecloth coverlet. There is, however, a sparseness of design which is not right for weaving, and examination reveals that, though the central part of the design is a correct weaving pattern, the quilt-maker has added to it a plain set with nine-patch corners, a typical way of putting quilt blocks together. The blending of design limitations from both weaving and quilt-making results in a stunning design. It is lightly padded, backed with white cotton, and quilted in diagonal lines.

Gift of Mrs. Archie Lamont. 970.257.4
L. 196 cm (77.5″). W. 189 cm (74.5″).





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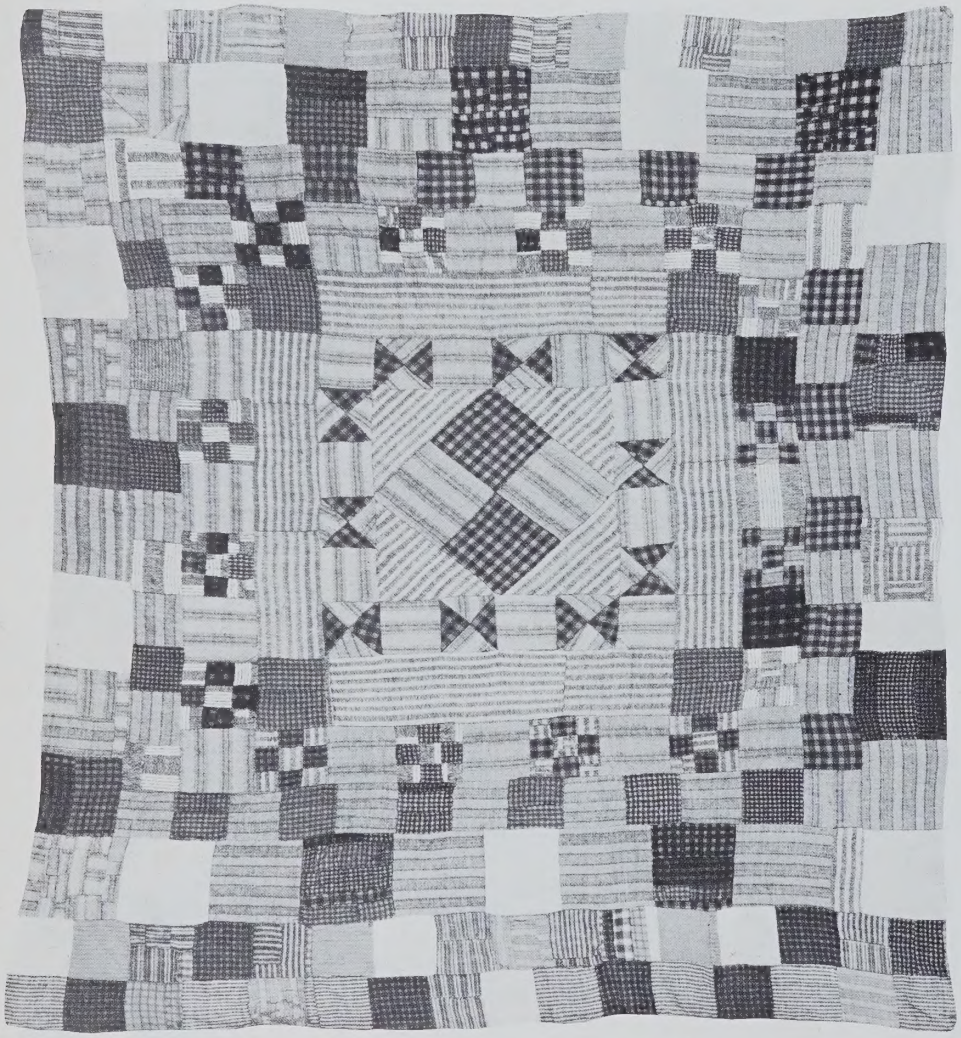

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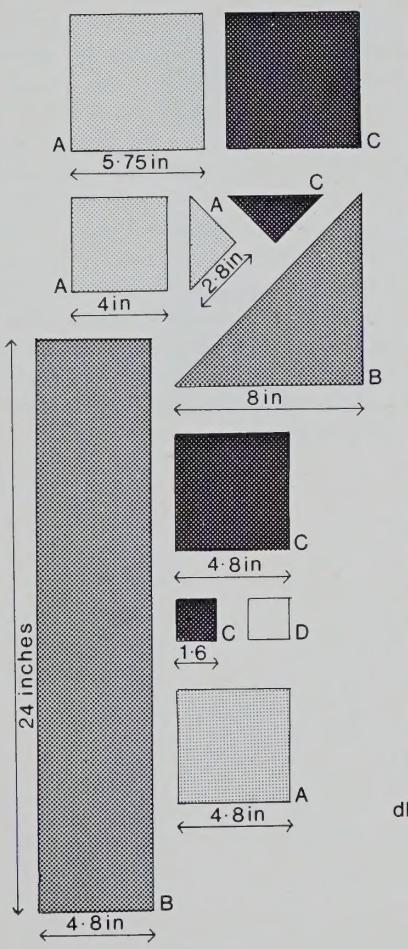
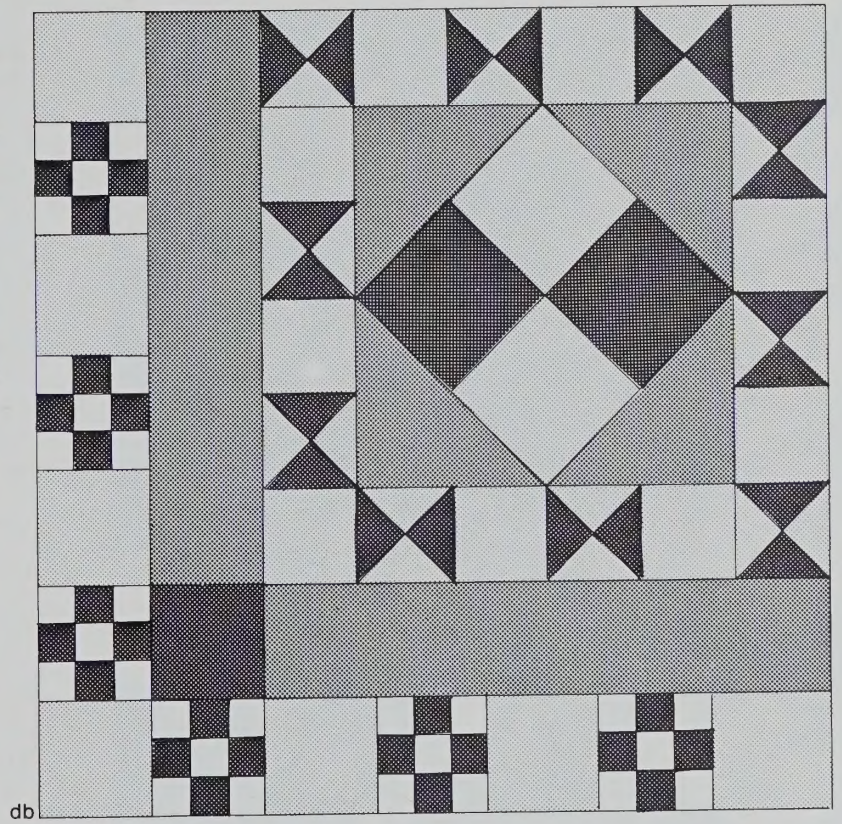
This fascinating quilt was made by the donor's mother, Mrs. Elizabeth McLean Harrison, near Orangeville in Dufferin County about 1865. It consists of handwoven woollen materials, many of which are worn and much older than the quilt. Some of the patches have been pieced from as many as six or seven tiny fragments, and the whole is obviously an effort to produce warm bedding from scanty resources. In pioneer Ontario waste was a sin which could not be tolerated, but even in a piece as totally utilitarian as this the love of colour and design comes through, and great care has been taken to build from scraps a quilt that would be not only warm but pleasing. It is an excellent example of the constructing of a quilt pattern by working from the centre out, border upon border, by far the most flexible method when supplies were scarce, varied, and fragmentary. It is lined with a heavy tan cotton material, padded with wool, coarsely quilted in a shell pattern and rather incongruously bound with black velvet.

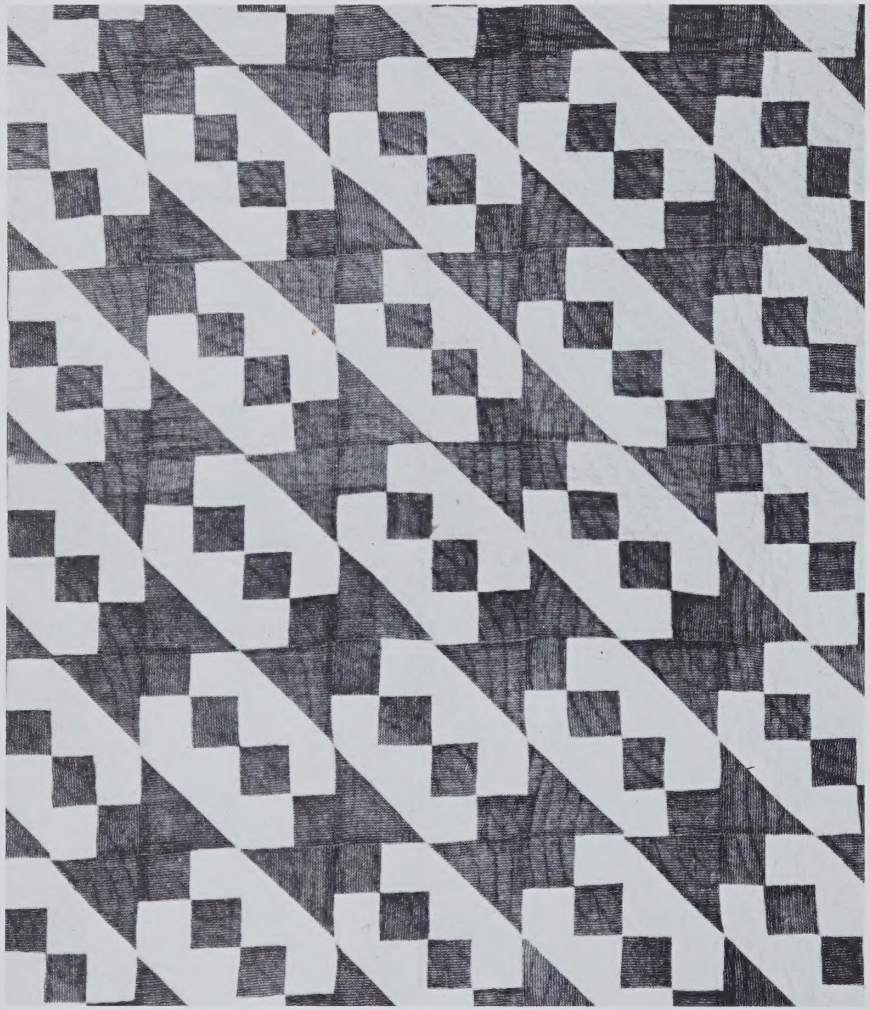
Gift of Mrs. James Burt-Gerrans. 948.145
L. 190 cm (75″). W. 170 cm (67″).

The diagram only shows the central portion of the quilt. As the quilt construction worked out to the edges, supplies had obviously become scarcer, and patches are more varied and pieced.



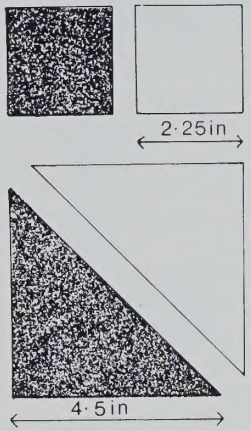


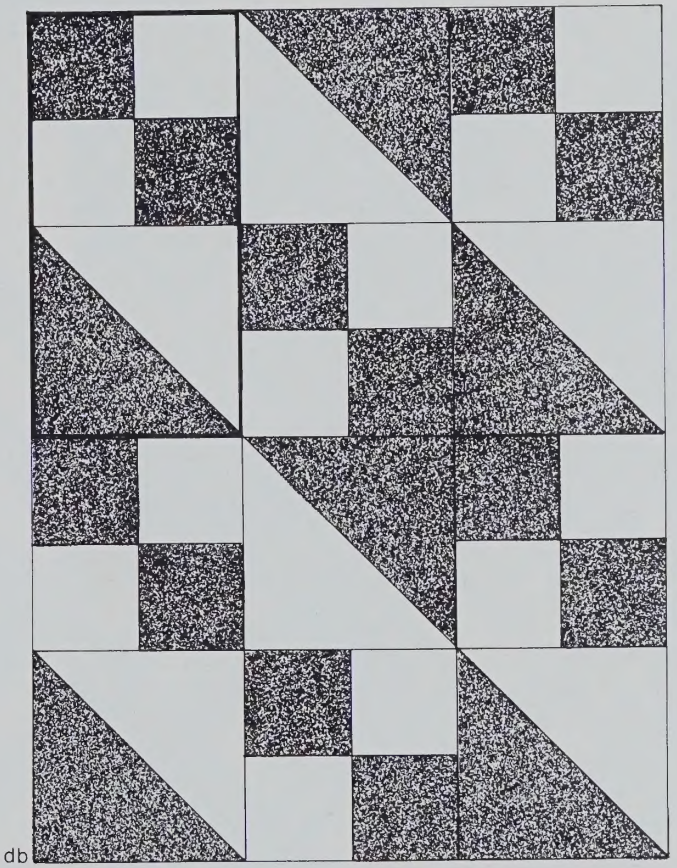
A. Wool tabby with inch-wide stripes in blue and grey.
B. Wool tabby with blue and orange stripes.
C. Wool tabby with brown and orange check.
D. Varied wool tabbies of similar tone range.



This example was made by Mrs. Andrew Ball of Brinston, Dundas County, about 1900. It is an ordinary utilitarian quilt, competent but not remarkable in workmanship, but the design is both exceedingly clever and very simple to construct. As can be seen in the heavy outlining of two blocks on the diagram, one block is made up of four small squares, and the second consists of two right-angled triangles joined to make a parti-coloured square. These two blocks are repeated alternately in a long strip. The strips are then joined reversing in half-drop repeat to produce the rather complex diagonal pattern. It is attractive in pink and white cotton with a quilted shell pattern totally unrelated to the piecing.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Langdon. 969.280.
L. 207 cm (82″). W. 165 cm (65″).





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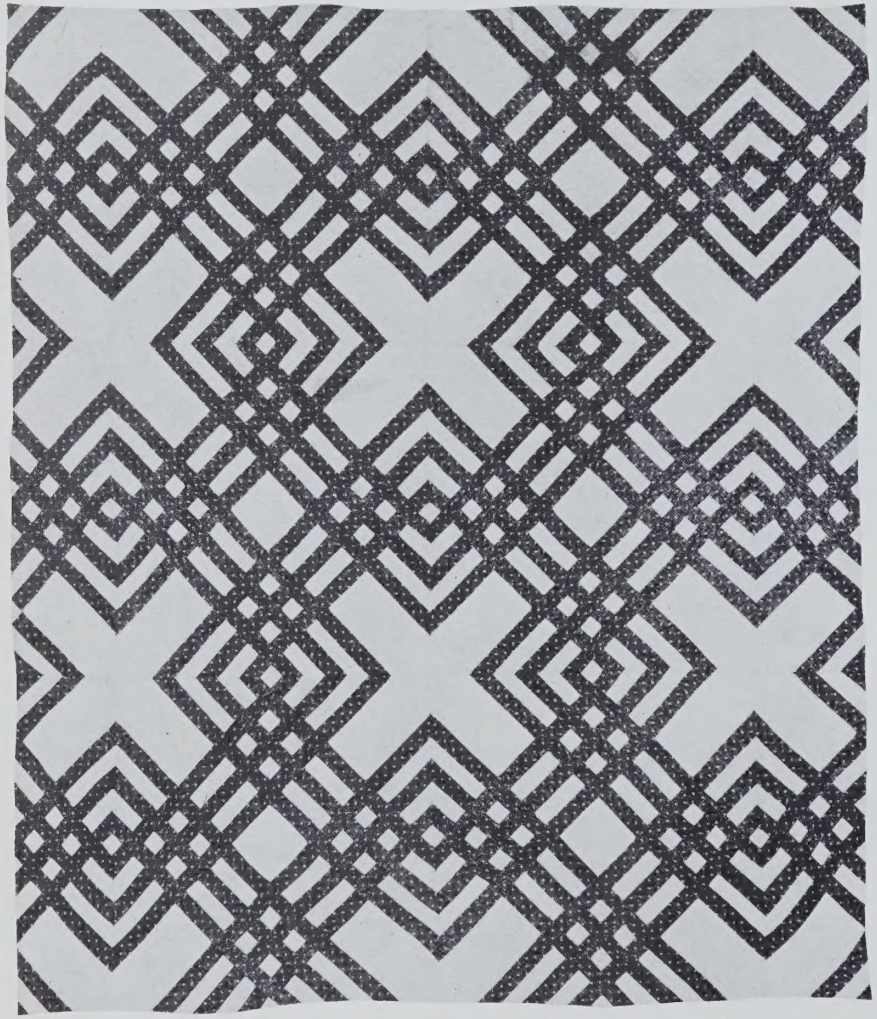
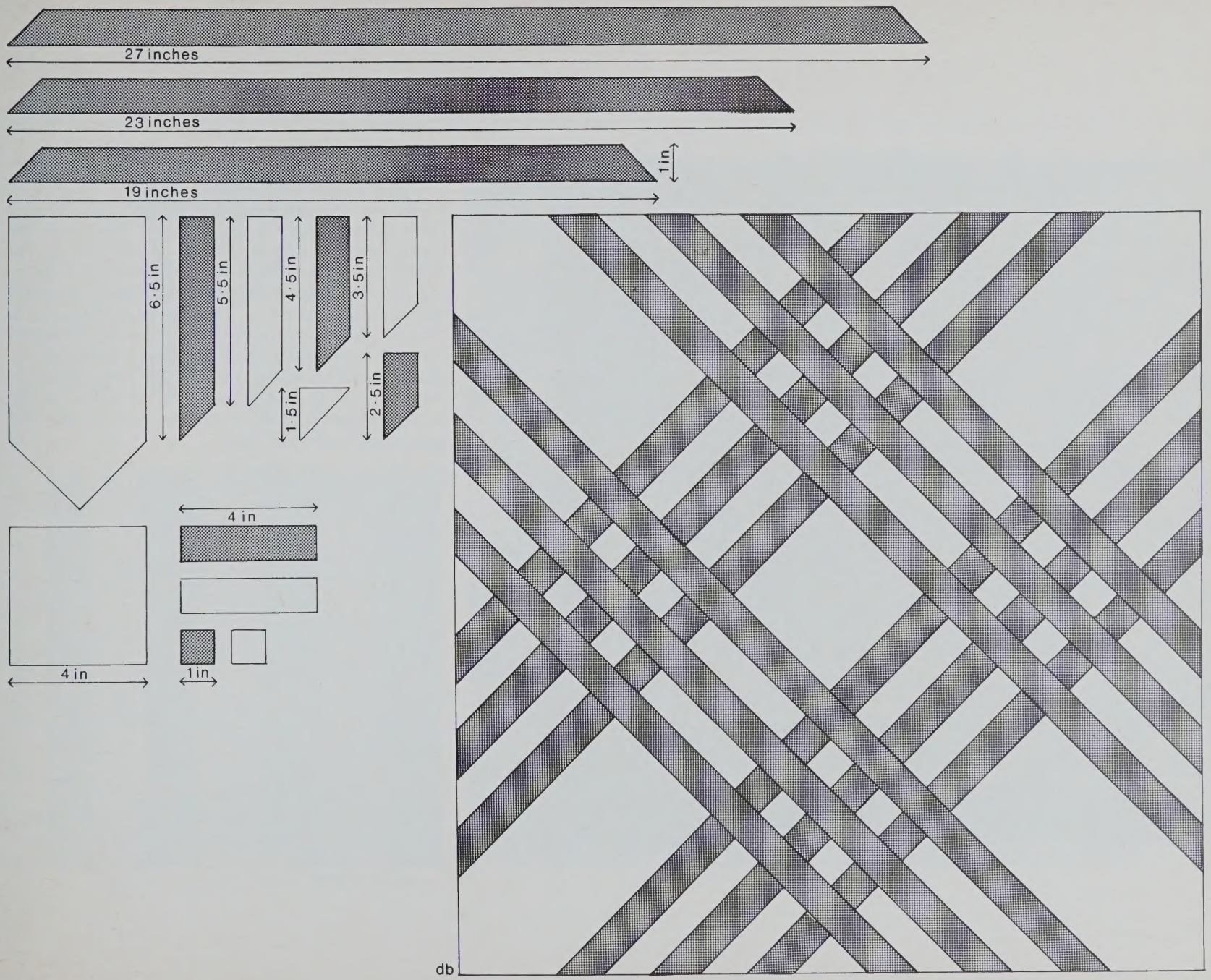


This quilt from Waterloo County, made in the latter part of the nineteenth century, gives quite a different effect from the more usual patterns. It looks as though the bands had been appliquéd to the ground but it is in fact entirely pieced. Perhaps the name that the donor gave to the pattern, "All Tangled Up", indicates the state of mind of the maker while wrestling with its complexities. One unit of construction is shown in the diagram. There are six of these large blocks in the centre of the quilt with part units at either side. The quilt has a pink cotton ground and bands of small lilac-grey floral print. It is lightly padded and backed with pink cotton; its quilting follows the lines of piecing with the open areas filled with leaf motifs.

Gift of Mrs. Elton Witmer. 967.175.24.
L. 215 cm (85"). W. 191 cm (75.5").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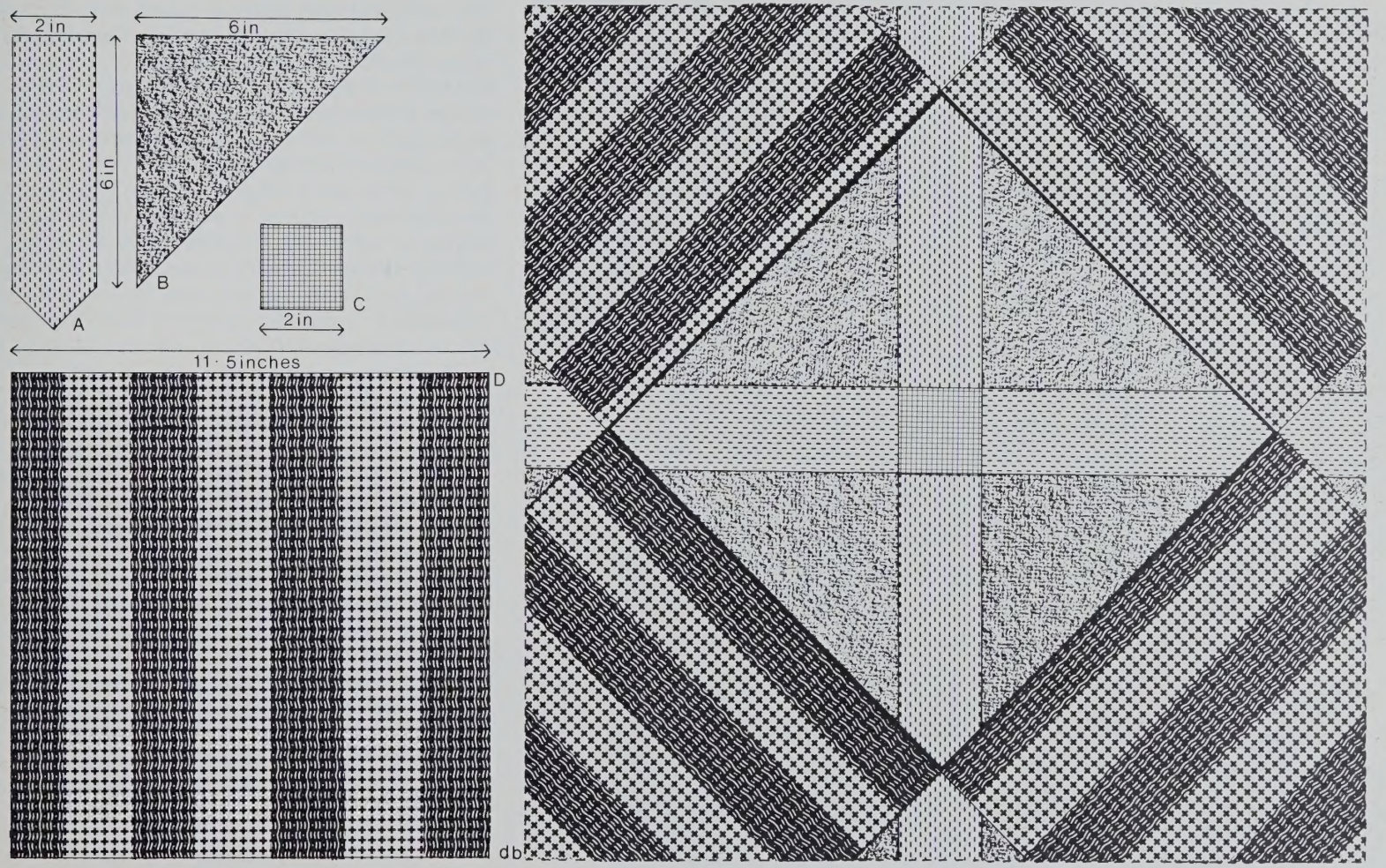
9

This simple pattern, made in Waterloo County in the late nineteenth century, depends for its rich effect on the rather strange printed cottons that have been used. As can be seen in the diagram, the basic design is simple. Two blocks placed on the diagonal are used alternately. One is a plain square, but the strong shaded stripes of its material give the appearance of piecing. The alternate block has a simple pieced cruciform, also in busily patterned printed cottons. The quilt has heavy padding and simple quilting. In our cold climate unheated bedrooms made heavy quilts a winter necessity. Heavy use no doubt accounts for the fact that very few old warm quilts have survived.

Gift of Mrs. Elton Witmer. 967.175.23.
192 cm (75.5") square.

A. Cotton with purple print on white.
B. Purplish printed cotton, with indefinite pattern.
C. A different printed cotton, matching B in colour.
D. Two different printed cottons with strong shaded striping in brown and purple.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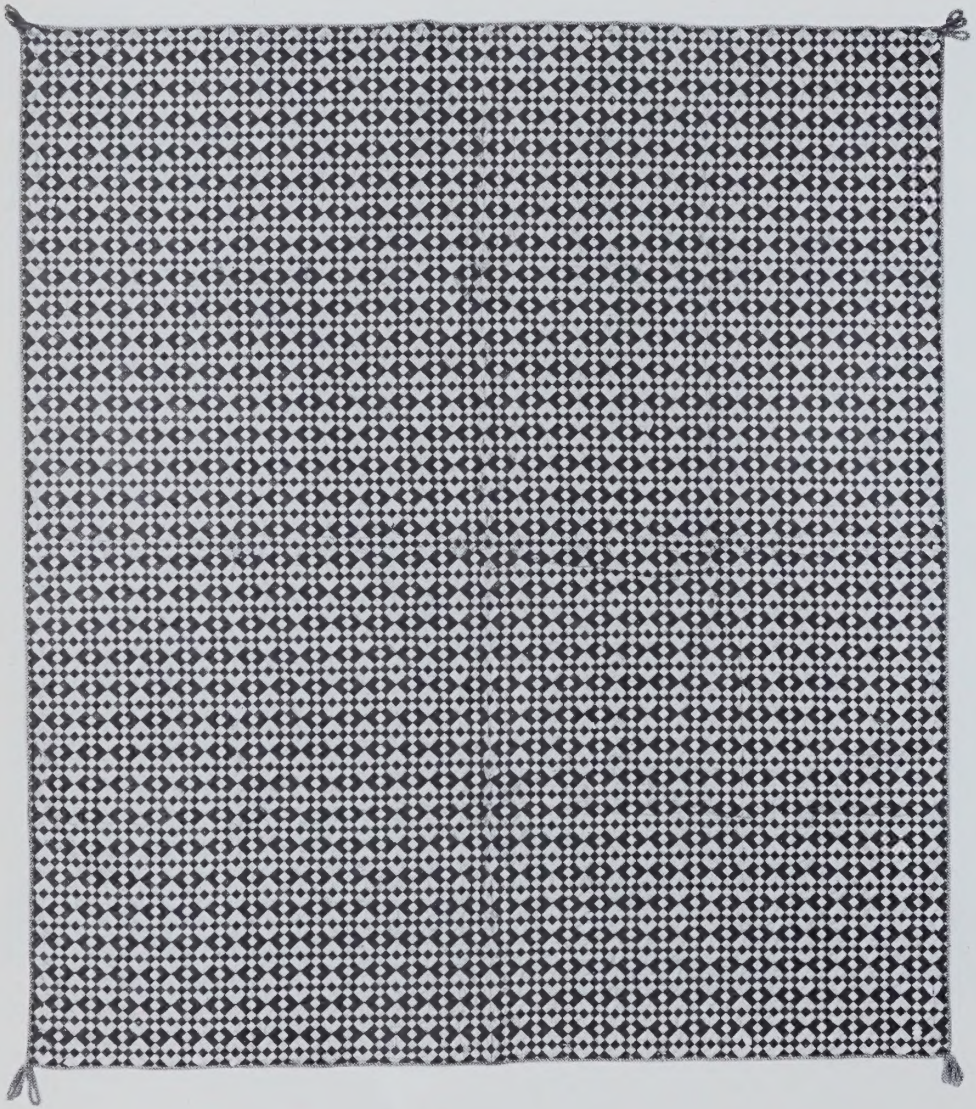
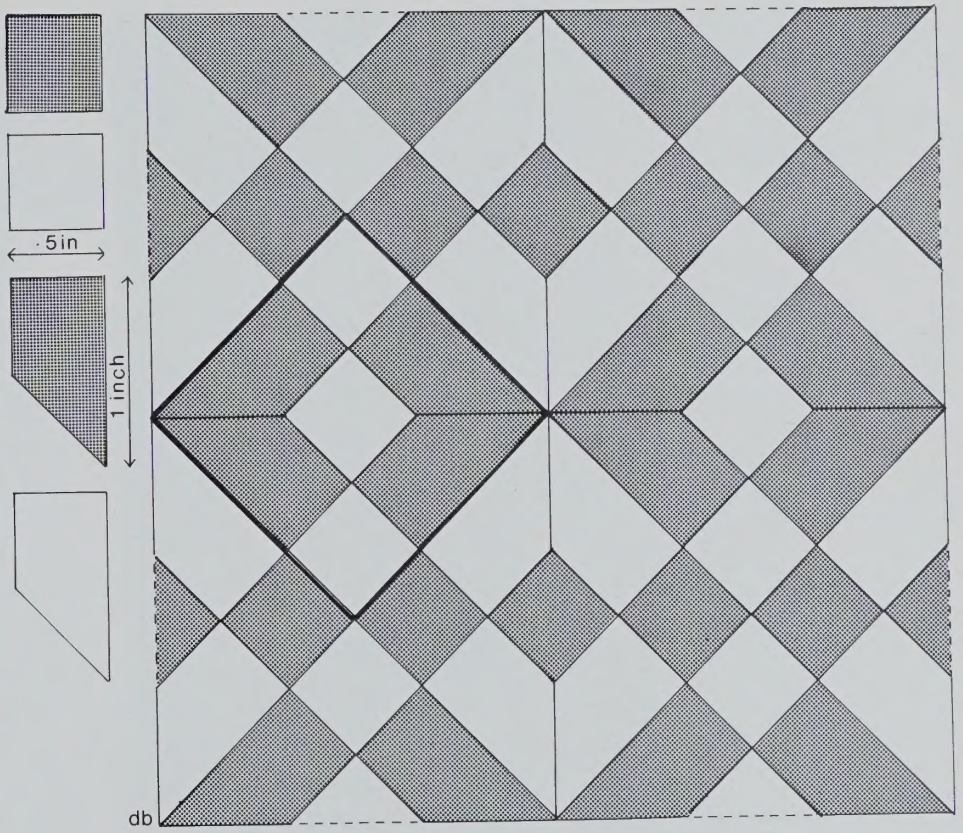
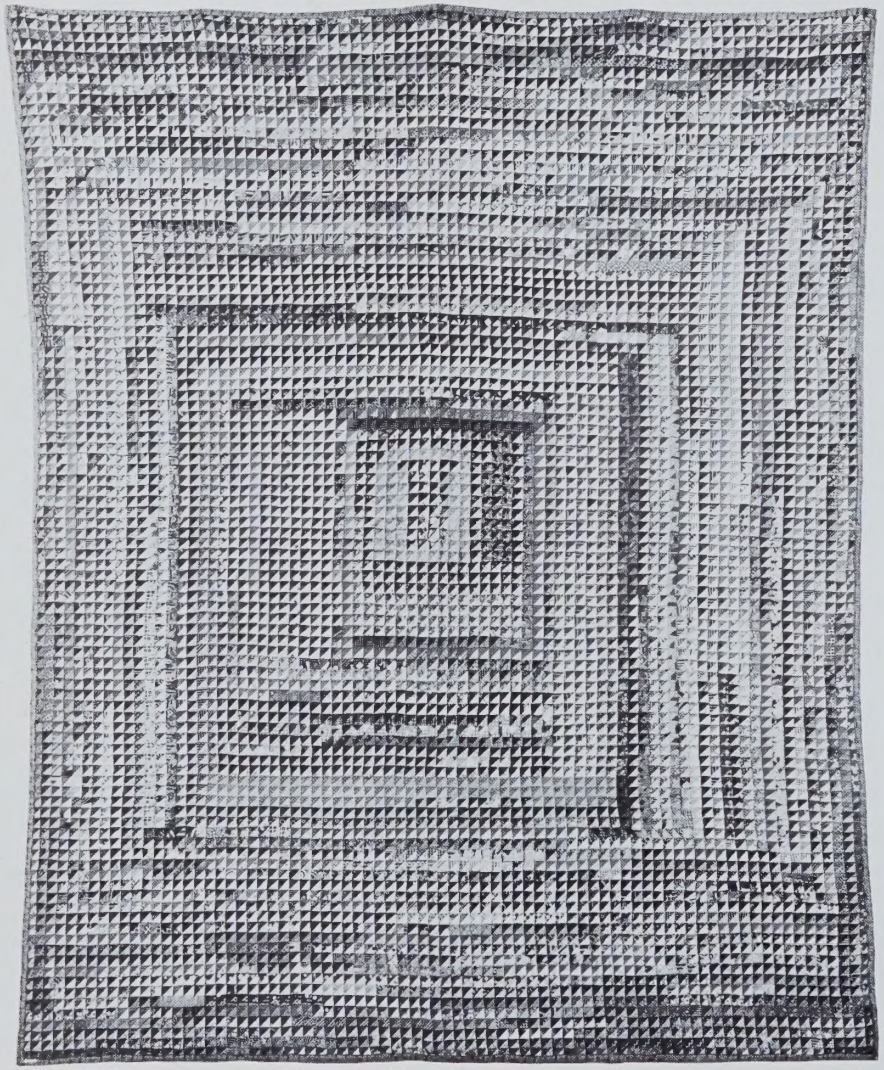


This quilt was made late in the nineteenth century by Miss E. M. Broddy in Brampton, Peel County, of approximately 13,400 pieces of pink and purplish-brown shot silk taffeta. The diagram shows the design actual size. All pieces have been basted to a paper pattern (still in place) and then carefully top sewn together. In this day and age it is hard to understand the late nineteenth-century fad for taking good material, cutting it into tiny slivers and then sewing it together again with the finest of stitches and the greatest of care. It must be remembered that life was comparatively easy for the well-to-do at that time. This quilt is not far in date or area from the handwoven quilt No. 6, but the lifestyle that produced the two productions are aeons apart and dramatize the contrast of life styles that existed from almost the earliest time of settlement in Ontario. The pioneer and his family, breaking the land and establishing a farm, producing almost all the necessities of life by their own hard work, were widely separated from the town-dweller, the doctor, lawyer, merchant, or factory owner, with money, servants, and wives and daughters with a very considerable amount of leisure. The winter evenings were long and there was little outside entertainment. Very often ladies sat and sewed while someone read aloud. Idleness was shunned, so work was done even if it was totally useless. In spite of the uselessness of the quilt, its maker probably basked in a glow of fame because she was able to piece a finer quilt than anyone else in the neighbourhood.

The pattern is an interesting one. The basic simple unit, made in alternating colour schemes, has been outlined heavily in the diagram. The quilt is padded with a thin wool bat, lined with pink cotton sateen, edged with silk cord, and tied at intervals, not quilted.

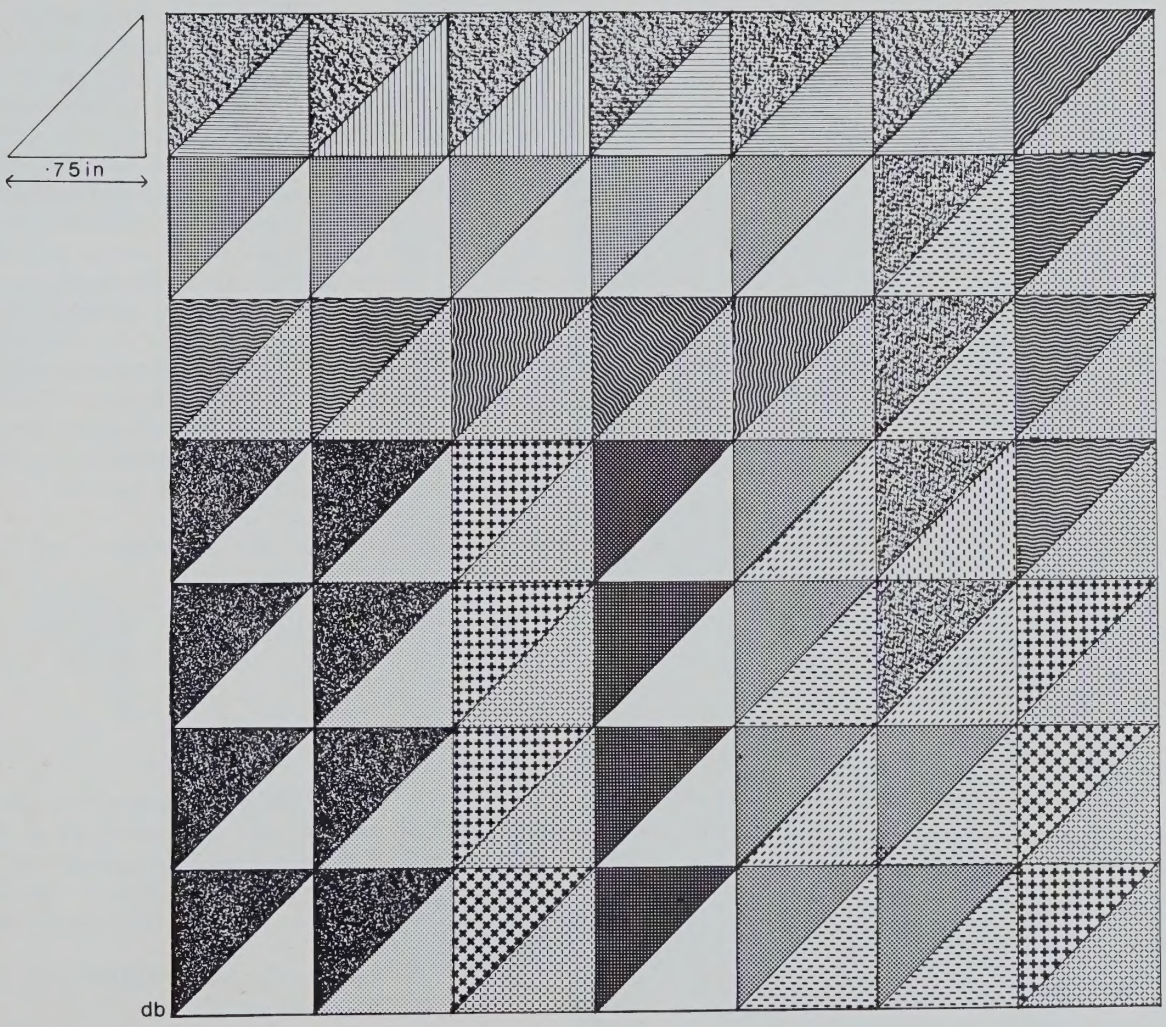


Gift of Mrs. I. R. Melhuish. 946.1.1.
L. 320 cm (126″). W. 285 cm (112″).



This quilt was made about 1880 in the Norwood district of Peterborough County from nearly 8000 tiny right-angled triangles of varied cotton materials. Unlike the previous quilt, which involved a great deal of work simply for the pleasure of doing it, this appears to be a genuine effort to utilize every tiny scrap of material to produce a thoroughly usable everyday quilt. It is obvious from the way the colours repeat that the quilt has been built out from the centre, and most likely work on it extended over a considerable period of time, possibly even years. Scraps that were too small for normal quilt patches could be used in this way. One senses that each time scraps, no matter how tiny, became available they were put together, and another round or part-round added to the growing quilt face. The result is very attractive, as the plan of joining a light piece to a darker one has been adhered to consistently and the concentric method of working has produced a pleasing distribution of brighter colours. The patches have been joined by careful handsewing with backing and binding added by machine. It is padded lightly and has just sufficient quilting to hold the layers together.

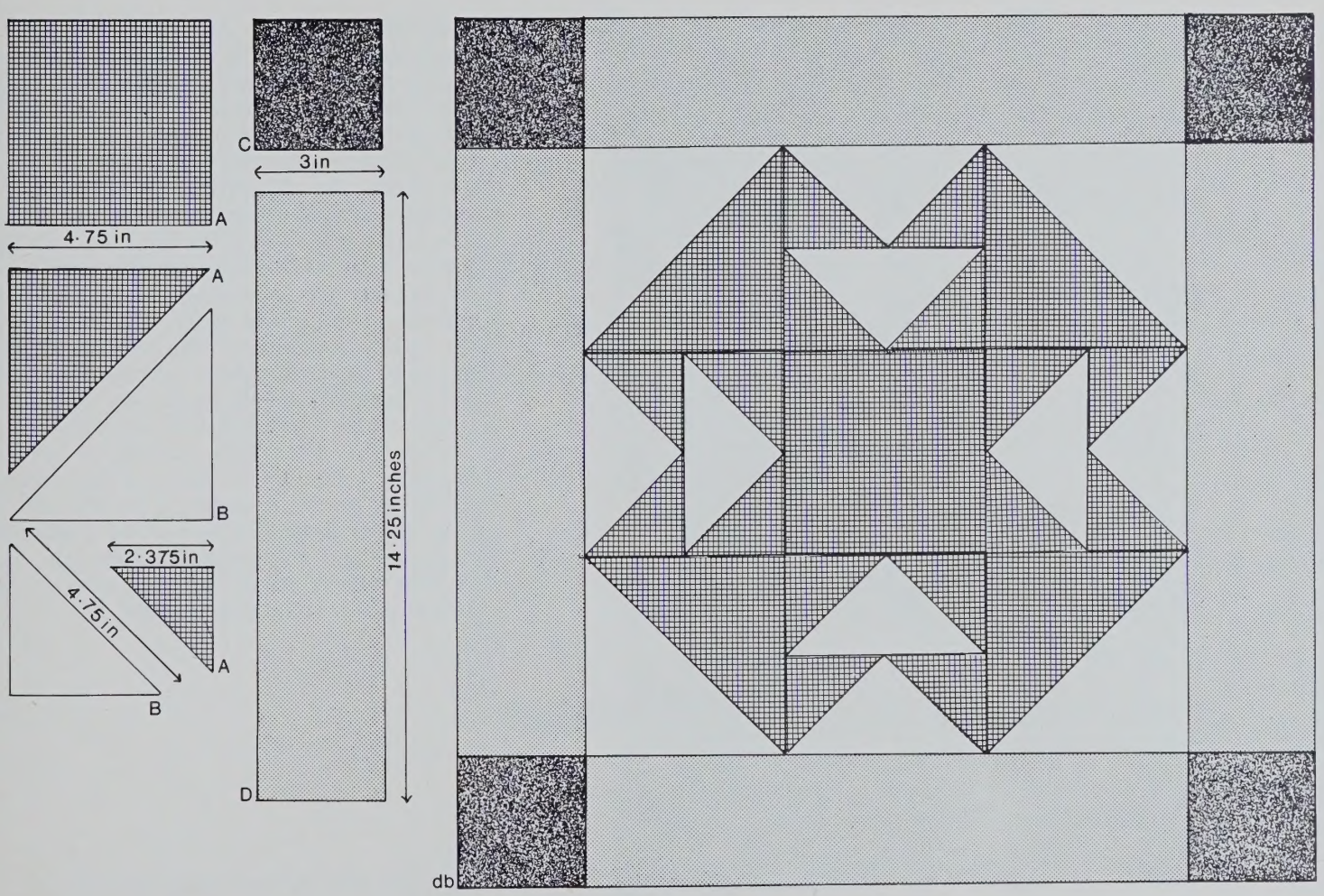
Gift of Miss Irene Stephen. 972.384.
L. 190 cm (75″). W. 152 cm (60″).


·75 in
db

Part of a quilt face of handwoven patches which comes from Lincoln County and was made about the middle of the nineteenth century. The quilt from which this piece has been salvaged suffered many indignities. Having outlived its usefulness in the home, it must have been relegated to use in a barn somewhere on the banks of the Jordan River. From that lowly use it was thrown out, caught by the spring floods, and swept down the river to be found at the high water mark and brought home by a child. It was a miserable object, worn, sodden, and dirty, but part of it was still good and so was washed, mended, and presented to the ROM. It holds a special place in the Museum as being the most elaborate pieced quilt pattern yet found made of material handwoven in Ontario, a happy ending for a sad tale of neglect.

Gift of Mr. Mark Burnham. 965.123. L. 128 cm (50″). W. 44 cm (17″).

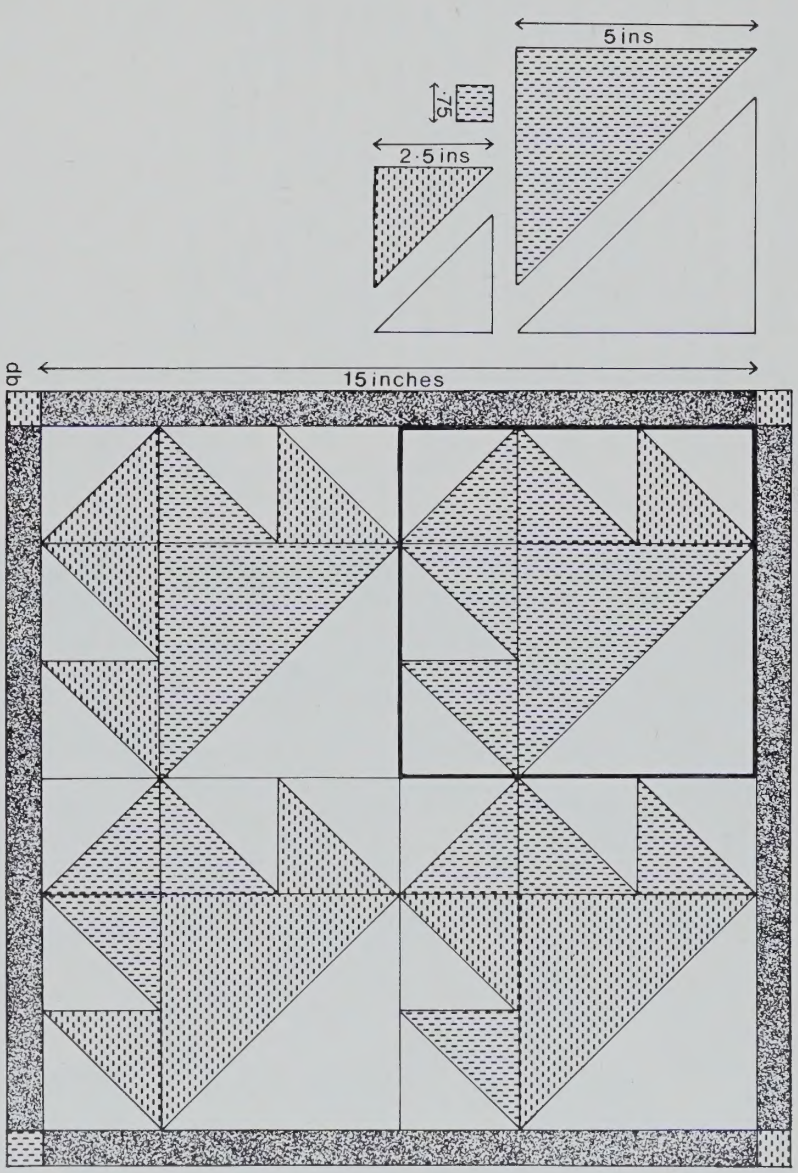
A. Wool tabby predominantly pinkish red with natural, pale blue, and dark green.
B. Various plain tabby materials with natural white cotton warp and natural brownish wool weft.
C. Tabby with brown cotton warp and indigo blue weft.
D. Tabby with natural white cotton warp and reddish pink wool weft.

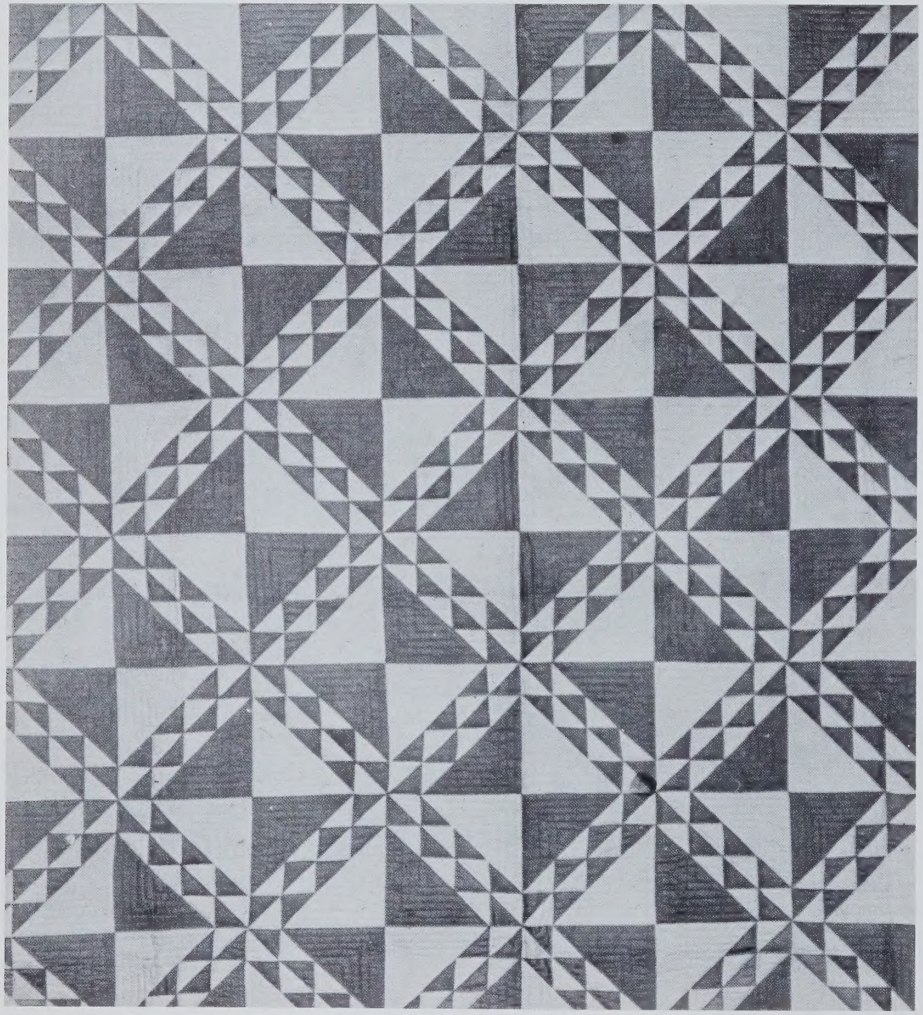

A
4·75 in
A
B
2·375in
4·75in
A
B
C
3in
14·25inches
D
db

13

Girls started piecing quilt faces for their hope chests at a very young age, and nothing but the finality of death stopped some women from this favourite pastime. Between its four central motifs this quilt has an embroidered inscription in tiny cross-stitched letters, "E. Bruels aged 87 years". It was made near Stouffville, York County, about 1870. The central design, shown in the diagram has motifs of a tiny floral print in brown with the surrounds in pink. The pink has also been repeated for the next two surrounds, giving strength to the central portion of the design. The four "T" motifs are variants of the one used in No. 12 and are placed so that they reserve a similar form between them. The quilt has been made from varied cottons, many with small printed patterns, and some of the patches are extensively pieced. It is another example of a design worked out from the centre, border by border in order to get the best layout with limited supplies. The backing is white with a tiny green leaf, the padding is very light, and the quilting follows simple repeated lines, straight in the body and curved in the border.

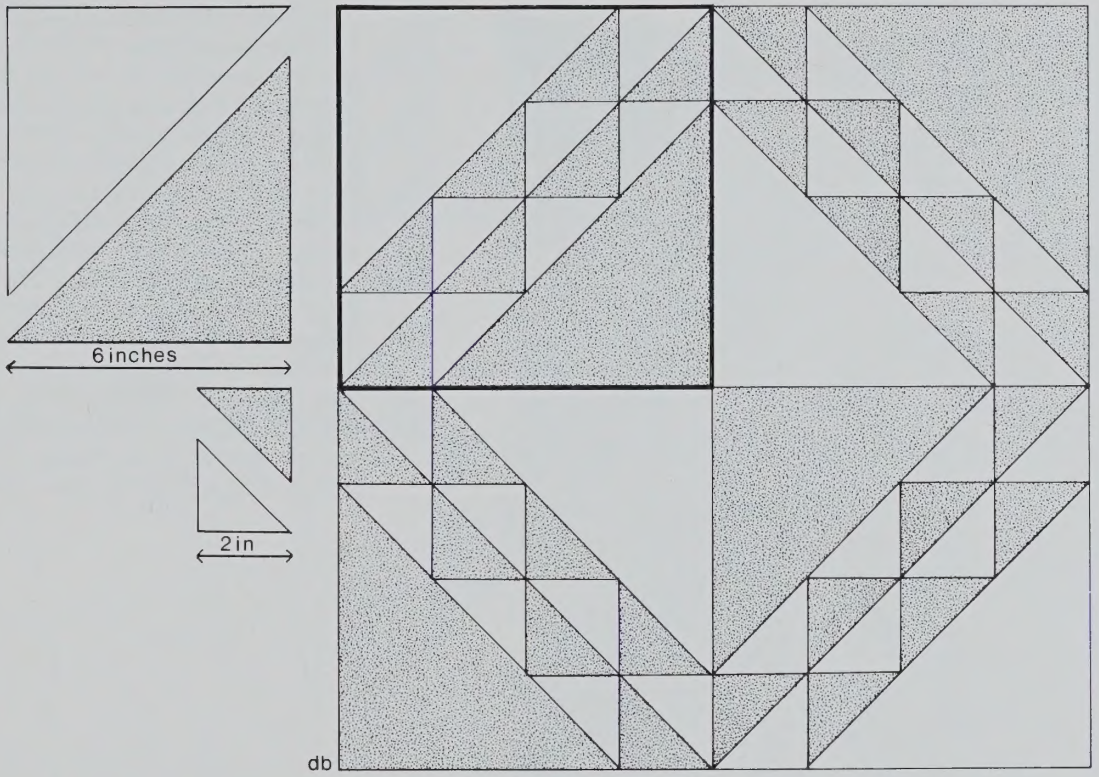
Gift of Mr. Silas H. Armstrong. 953.148.
L. 208 cm (82"). W. 197 cm (77.5").

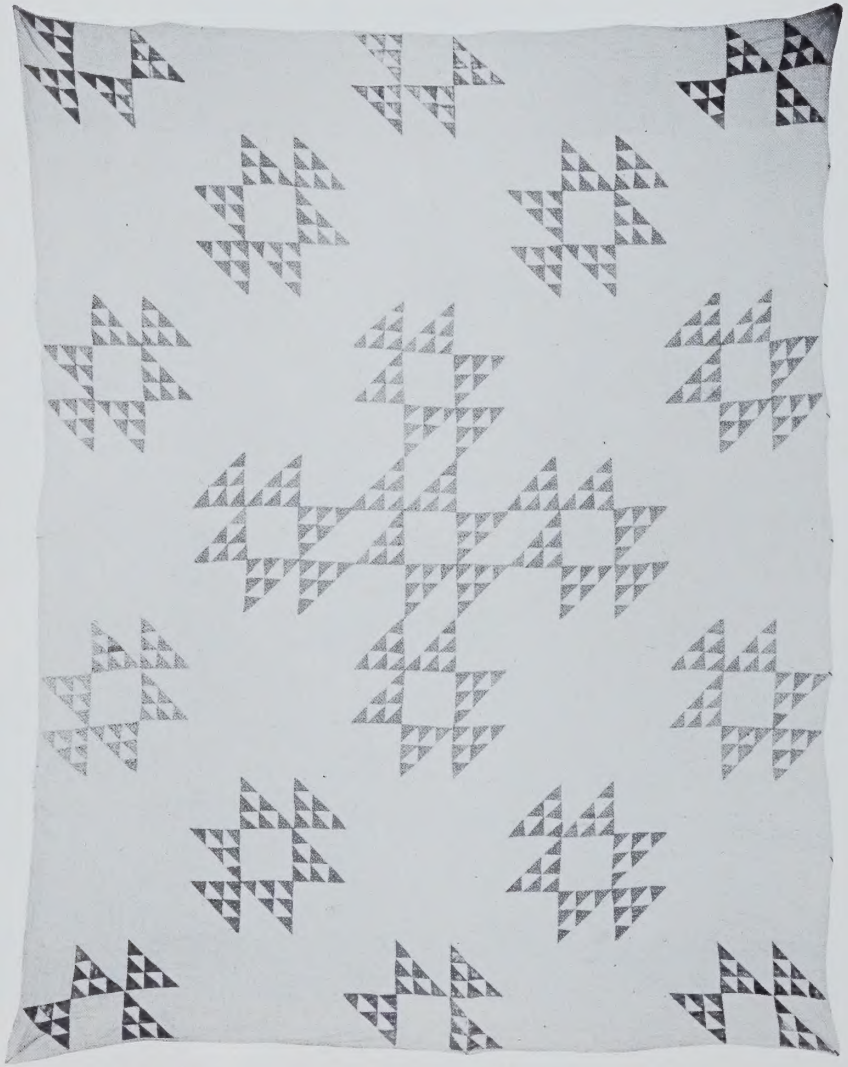

5 ins
.75
2·5 ins
15 inches



This example was made about 1860 by a member of the family of Samuel Fry, the well-known hand-weaver, near Vineland, Lincoln County, and is a beautiful example of the Mennonite tradition of fine sewing. The pattern is in a printed cotton with a tiny red design which gives a soft pink effect. The colouring is the only soft thing about the look of this quilt, with its firm straight piecing and excellent sewing. The quilting adds to the precise look, for each tiny triangle has a line of quilting one-eighth of an inch from the seaming, and the larger triangles are also outlined and have interior rows of straight quilting half an inch apart. The pattern is made from two sizes of right-angled patches, a very flexible pattern shape. If the material is in yardage rather than scraps, it cuts to excellent advantage with no wastage. The unit of the piecing is shown heavily outlined on the diagram. These units are turned to produce the diagonal lattice, a simple solution for the production of a fairly complex-looking pattern.

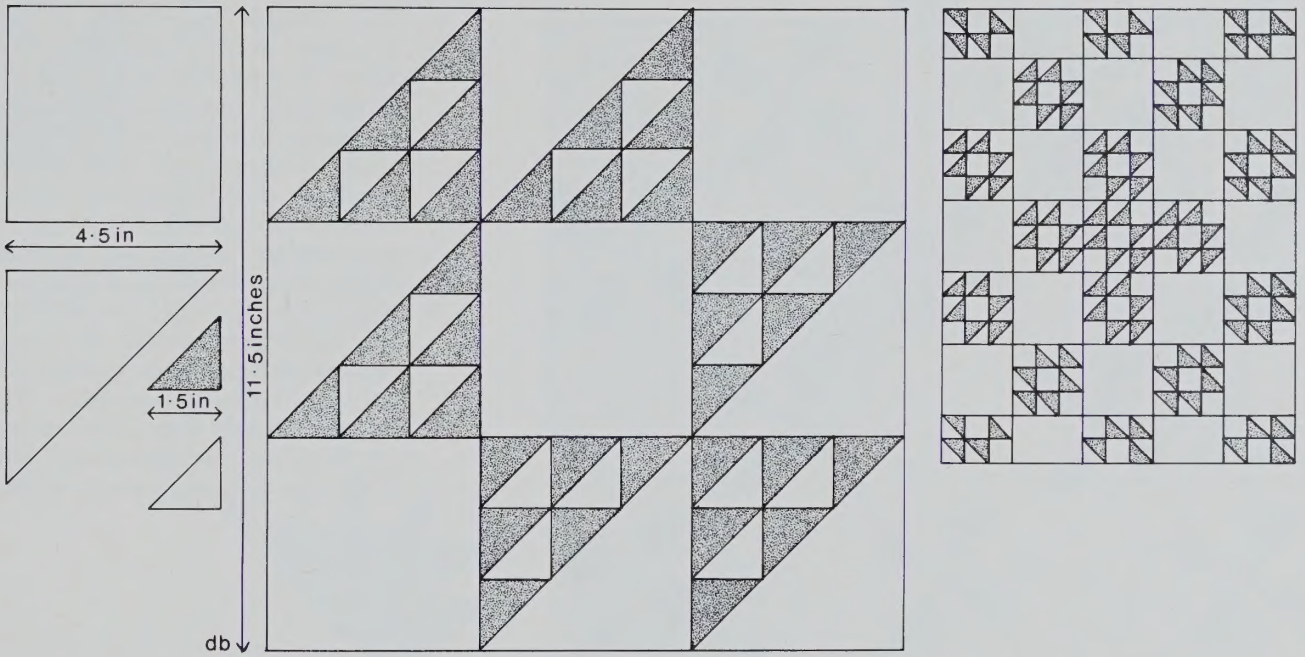
From the Annie R. Fry Collection. Lent by members of the Fry family. L965.11.29.
L. 211 cm (83.5″). W. 200 cm (79″).

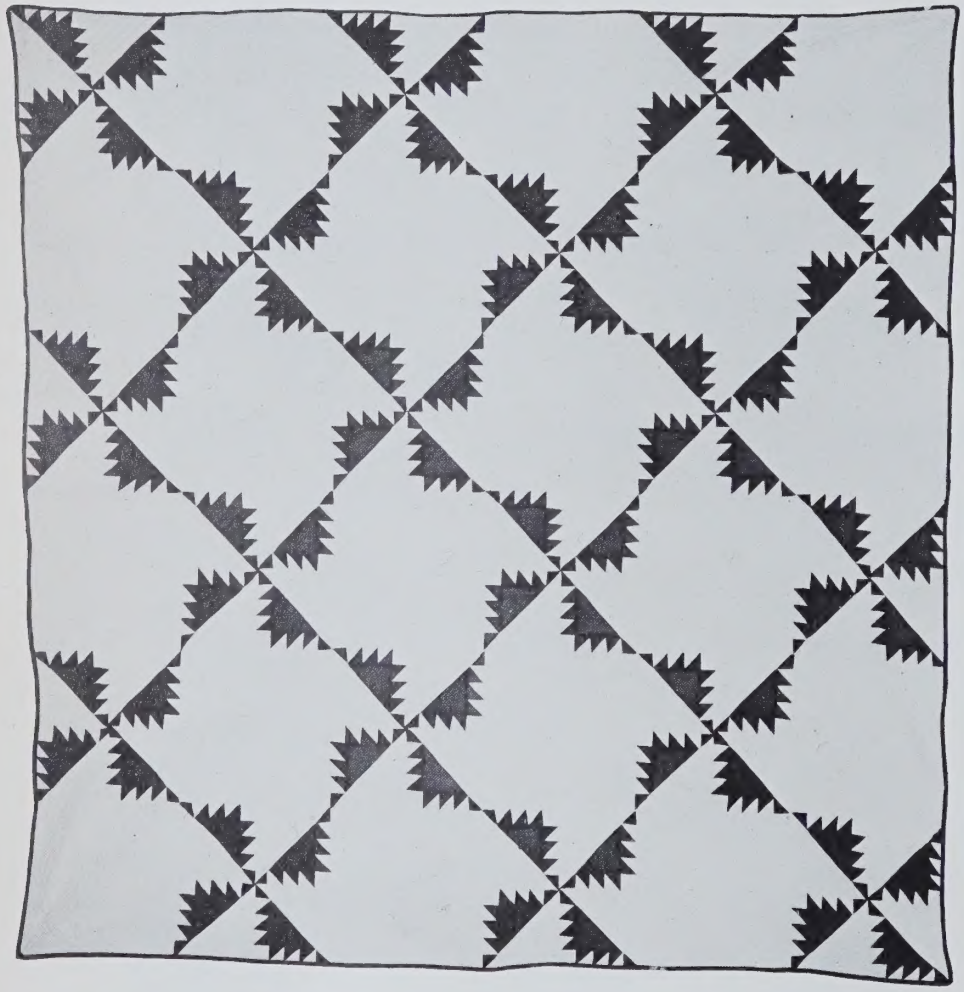

6 inches
2 in
db



This quilt was made in Lincoln County about 1860 by Catherine Gage Pettit (Mrs. W. I. Jones), the donors' mother, as part of her trousseau, which contained a dozen pieced quilts for everyday use and a beautiful appliquéd one for best. The materials are the usual white cotton and for the pattern, one of the ever-popular tiny red prints. There is light padding and quilting in a shell pattern. The design is another combination of right-angled patches put together in a manner that produces a lovely, free, floating, moving pattern. The diagram shows the basic unit composed of nine squares, three plain and six patterned. The small diagram shows the way these units are combined to make a central pattern surrounded by detached units which appear to be flying in different directions, alternating with large plain white blocks.

Gift of Miss Hattie I. and Miss Charlotte Jones.
967.168.3. L. 211 cm (83.5″). W. 161 cm (63.5″).

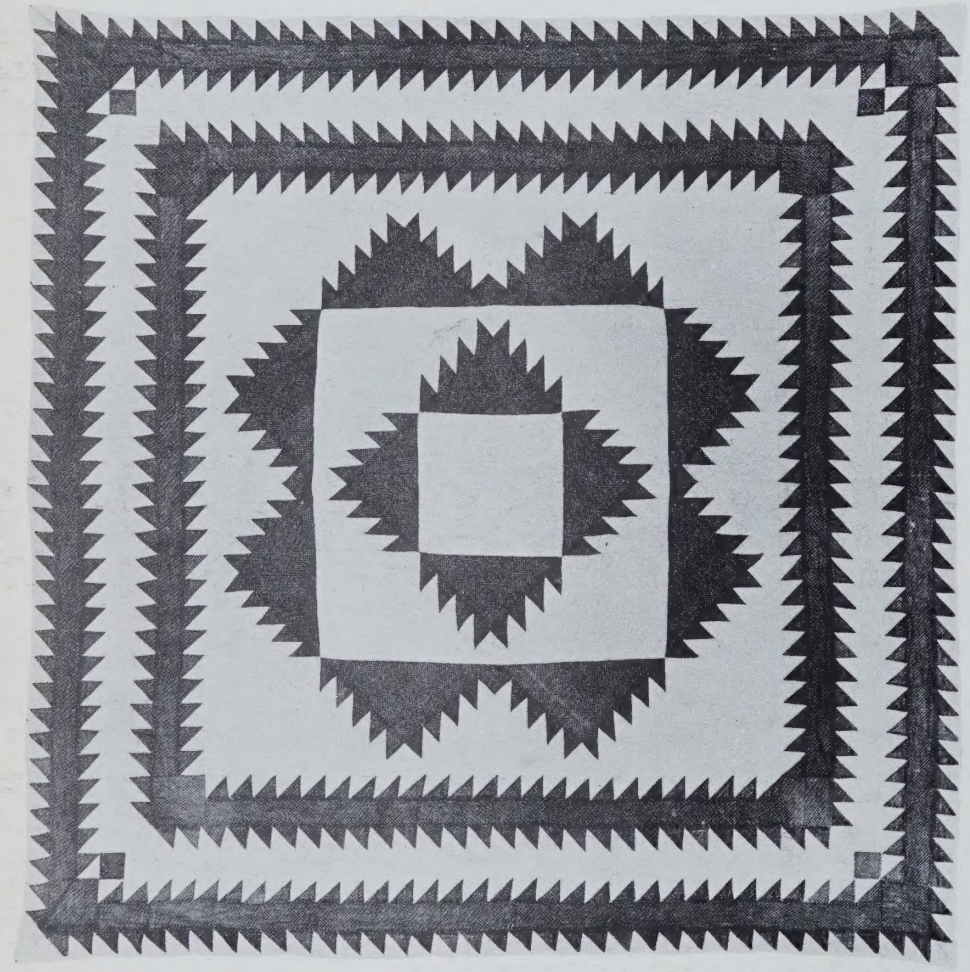

4·5 in
1·5 in
11·5 inches
db



This example was made by Maria Drummond Thomson of Domville, Grenville County, about 1875. The pattern is one that is often called "Delectable Mountains", a lovely name which comes from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* the book which, after the Bible, was most likely to be found in rural houses of North America. Many forms of this pattern exist. Its motif consists of small right-angled triangles set on edge to form jagged peaks along the back of a larger right-angled triangle. Here they are combined with plain triangles to form windmills which alternate with plain white squares and produce a delightfully airy and gay effect in red cotton on white. The quilt is lightly padded, backed with white cotton, and quilted in the plain squares with rosettes of leaves which turn in the same direction as the windmills.

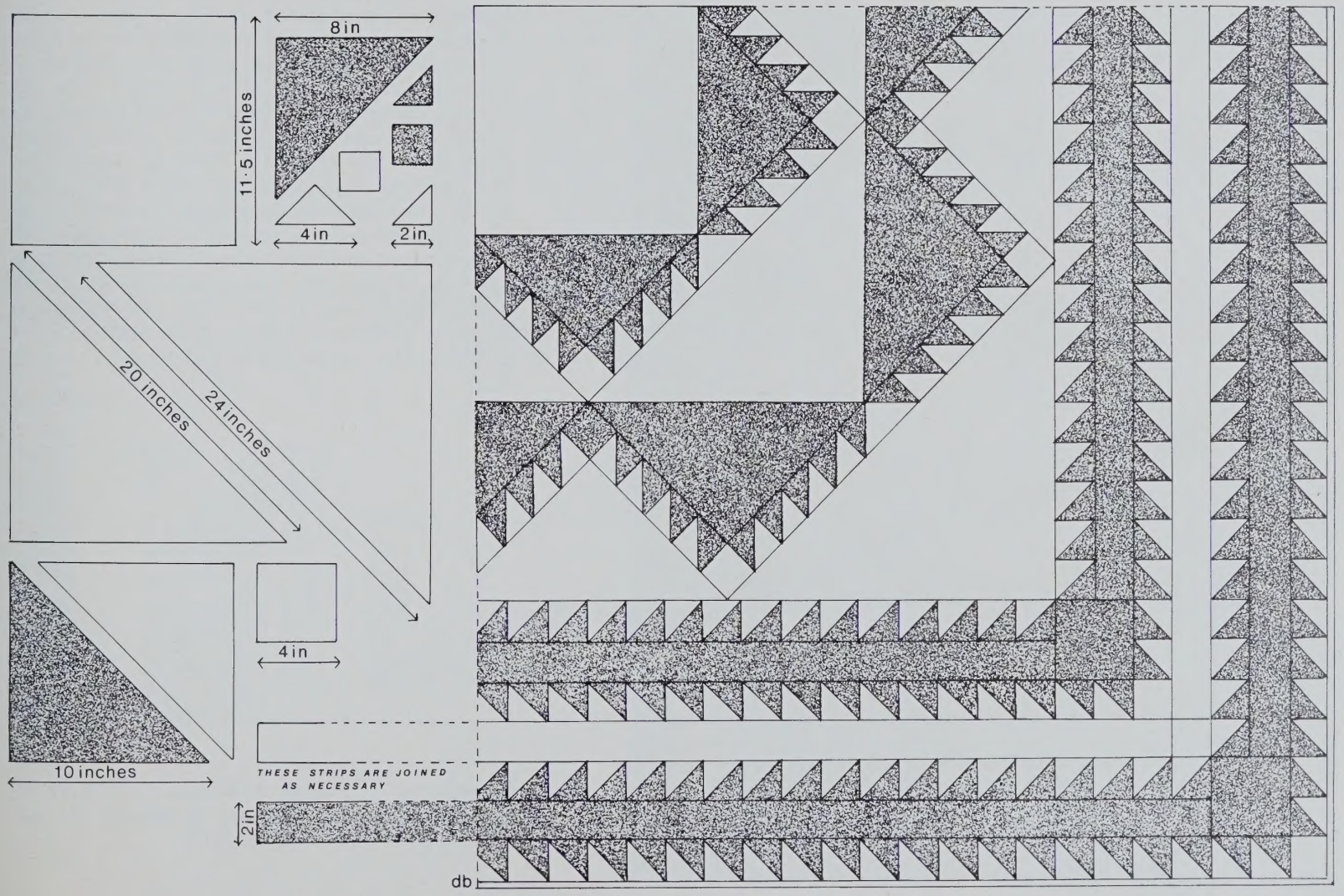
Gift of Miss Margaret H. Thomson. 968.109.25.
L. 206 cm (81.5"). W. 201 cm (79.5").

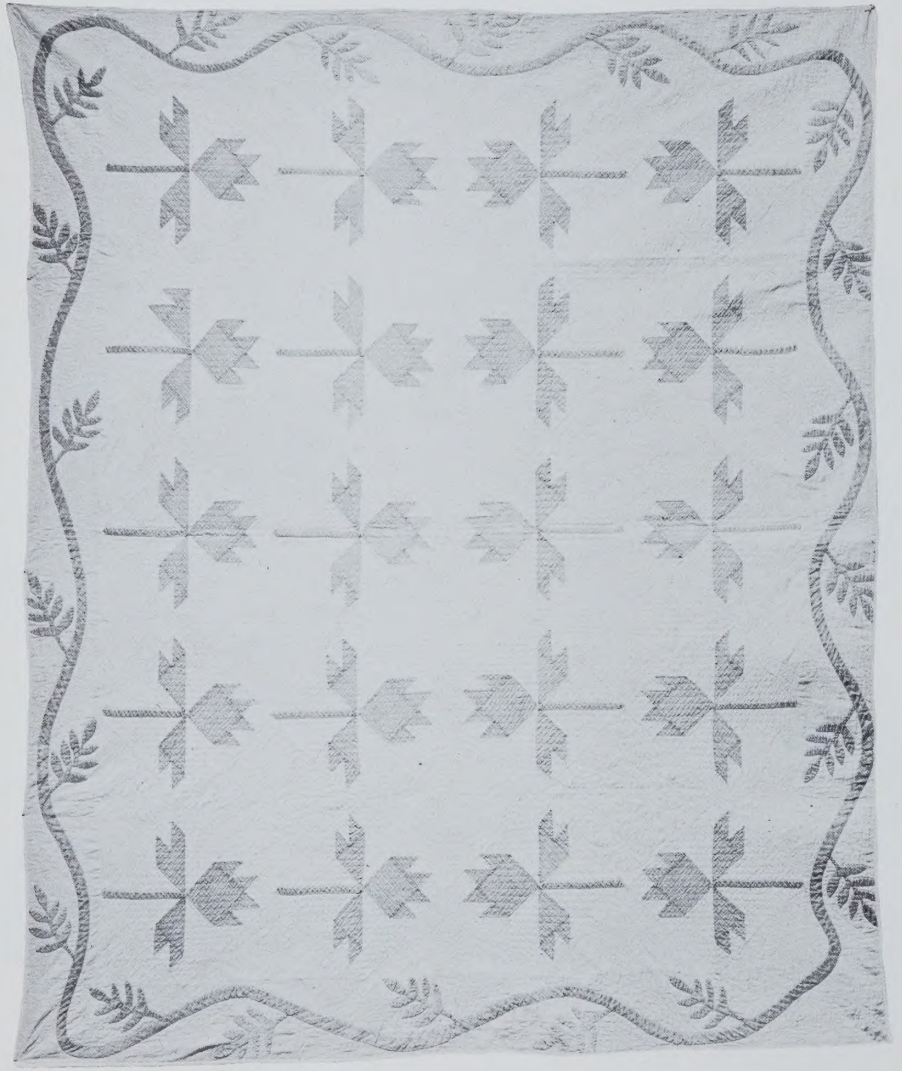
6·25in
3·75in
1·25
12·5 inches
db



This quilt was acquired at a sale at Thorold, Lincoln County, and was probably made between 1850 and 1860. It is another version of the "Delectable Mountains" pattern and is arranged to make an overall rather than a repeating design. The pattern material is pink printed cotton with tiny white dots reserved on it and the whole is overprinted with a fine lattice in red, which gives a very rich pink colour. The ground is fine white cotton and the lining the same. A minimum of padding has been used, quilting follows the piecing and simple lattice filling, and leaf forms are used in the border. The engineering of the design is expert, with each border building on the one inside it and all fitting perfectly.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Burnham. 969.311.1.
180 cm (71") square.

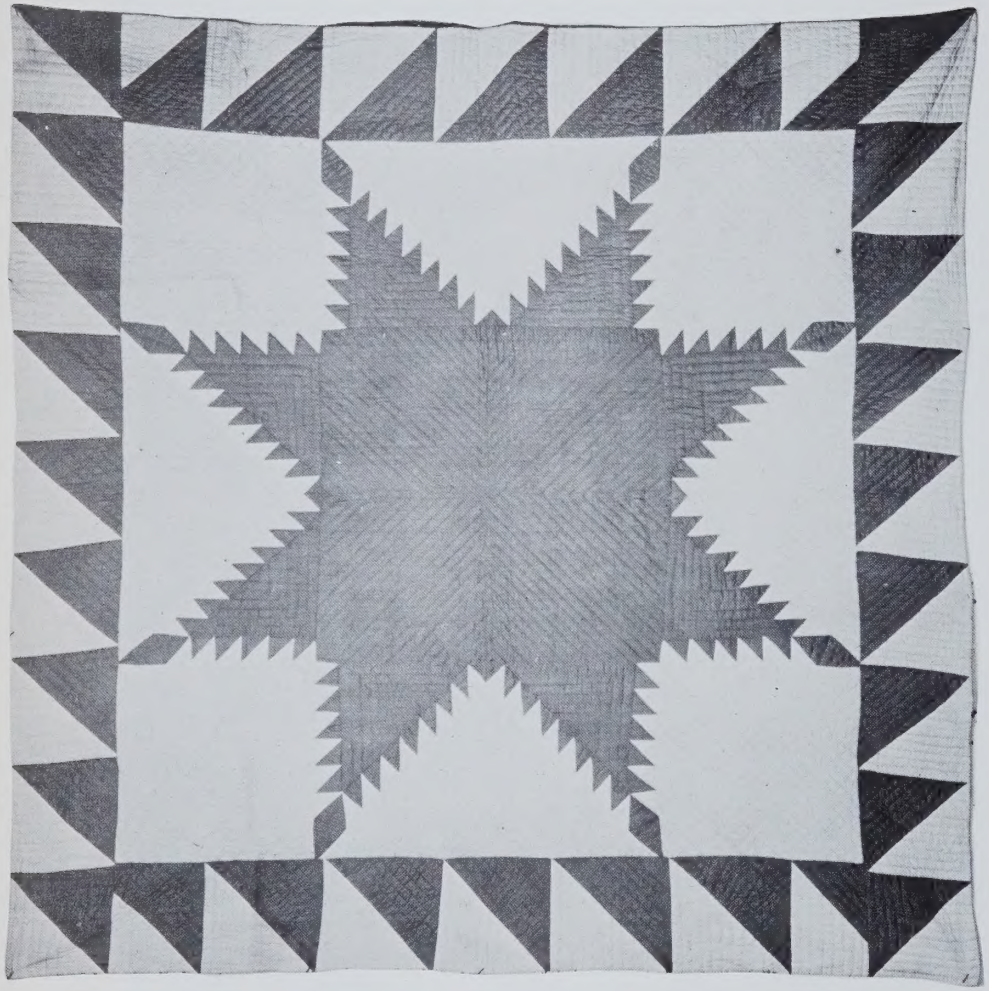

8 in
11·5 inches
4 in
2 in
20 inches
24 inches
4 in
10 inches
THESE STRIPS ARE JOINED AS NECESSARY
2 in
db



Made near Lindsay, Victoria County, about 1840, this example combines the two basic ways of making a quilt in its apple green pattern on a fine white cotton ground. The border is appliquéd, with the running stem made of a bias-cut band curved into shape. The main design is pieced, except for the stem of the leaf which has been appliquéd. The leaf, derived from the "Delectable Mountains" motif, is undoubtedly meant to be a maple leaf. In the border the quilting repeats this maple leaf motif in even more recognizable form. Perhaps here we have a very rare thing, a genuinely Canadian quilt design. The sewing of both piecing and appliqué is very fine. Padding is light and the quilting is of good quality. Rebound and slightly cut down in size.

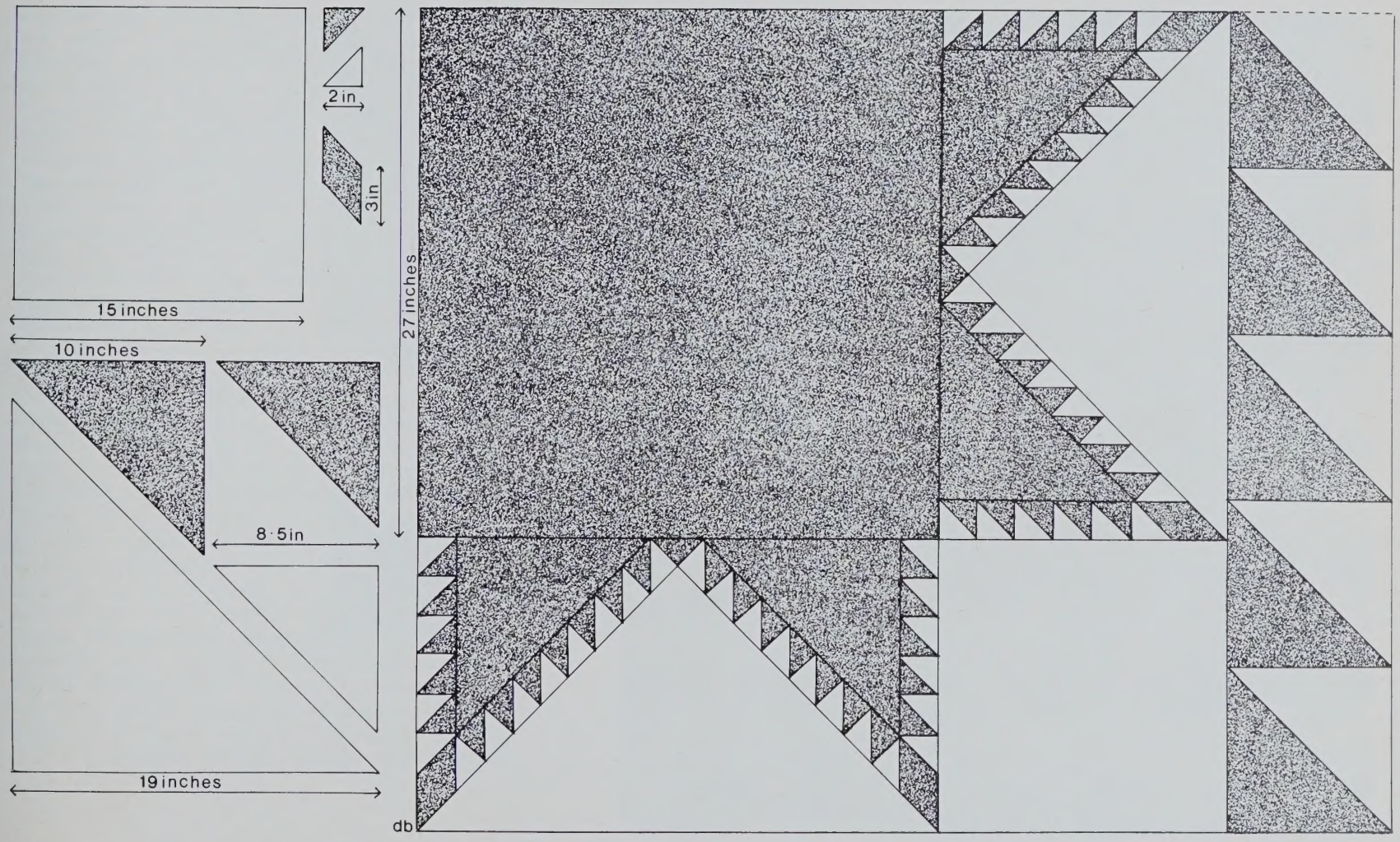
In memory of Harold B. Burnham (1912-1973), Curator of Textiles. Given by his friends. 974.64. L. 188 cm (74″). W. 152 cm (60″).

3 in
6·5 in
4·5 in
1·5 in
3 in
6·25 in
1 in
db

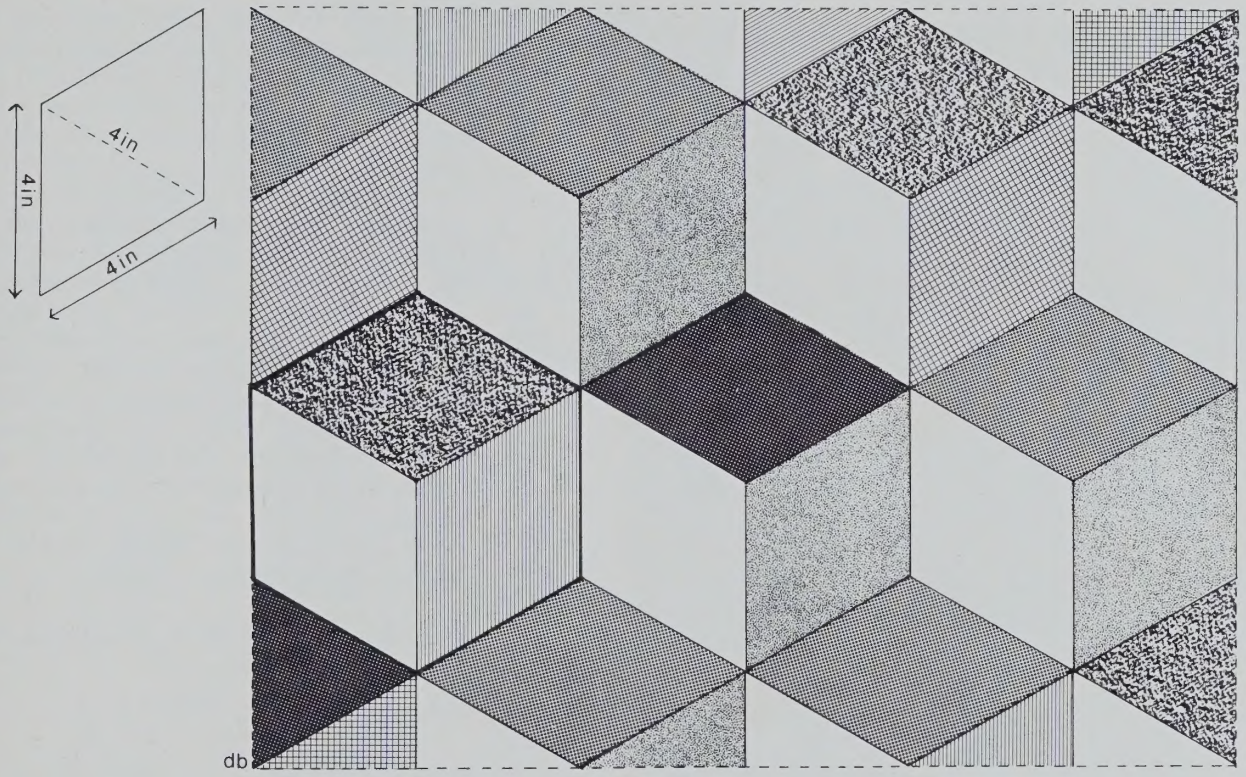


Made in Belleville, Hastings County, between 1850 and 1875, this large star pattern is basically very simple. It consists of a plain square surrounded by eight right-angled triangles, each of which is outlined by a band of small right-angled triangles in rather the same way that the "Delectable Mountains" are framed. The effect of pinkish red on white is quite stunning. It is backed with white cotton and lightly padded with quilting based on a diagonal lattice.

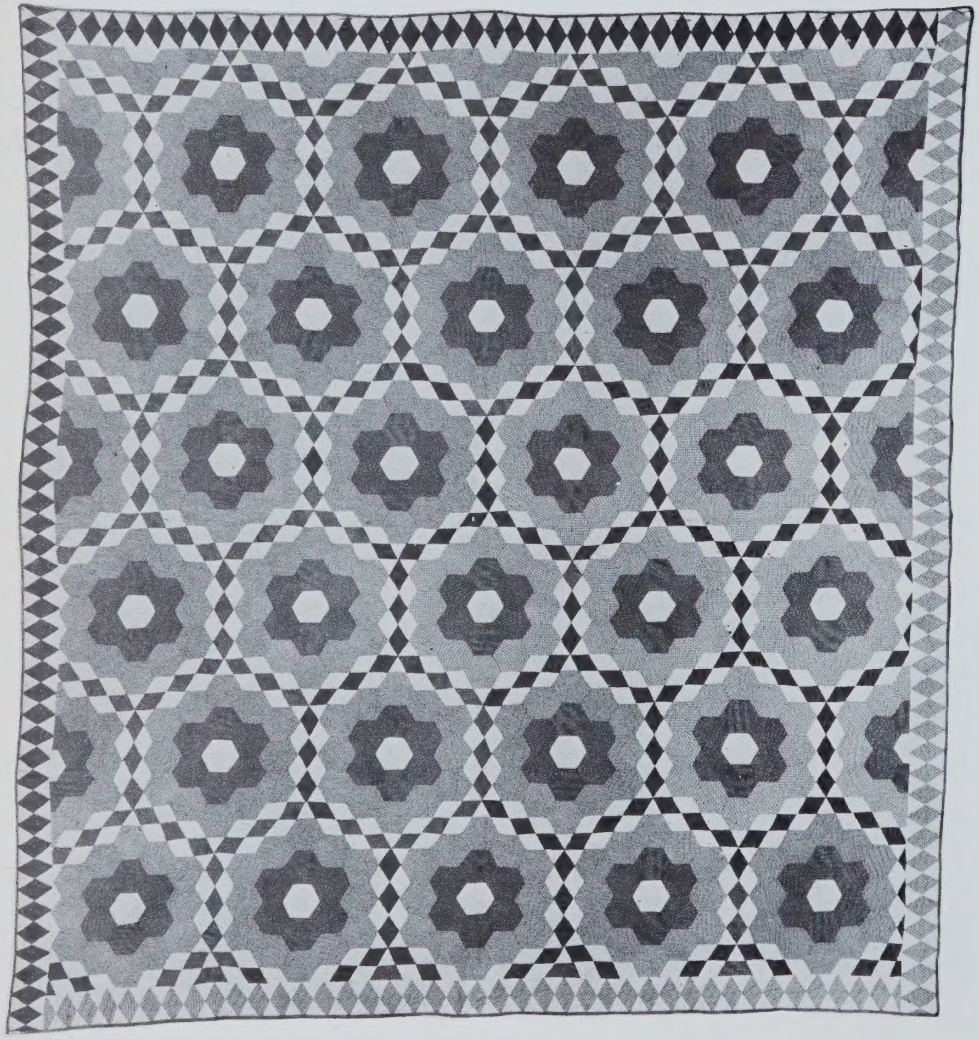
Gift of Mrs. C. D. McPherson. 969.188.1.
202 cm (80") square.


2 in
3 in
27 inches
15 inches
10 inches
8·5in
19 inches
db

The donor called this a "Friendship" quilt because each piece had been given to the maker, her mother Sarah Doane (Lundy) Daly, by a different friend. The quilt was made about 1870 in the Newmarket area of York County. The designs so far discussed have, in spite of their diversity, been based on the simplest of geometrical figures, the square, the rectangle, and the right-angled triangle. This quilt has a more complex basic unit, the diamond or parallelogram made up of two equilateral triangles. In cutting pieces for a quilt one must remember the geometric facts. Angles that fit together must add up to 360 degrees or the quilt face will not lie flat. The diamond shapes meet in two different ways: where the longer points of six of them come together to form the centre of a star each angle must be exactly 60 degrees or one-sixth of the 360 degrees; and where three pieces meet at the broader points of the diamonds each angle must be 120 degrees. This does not mean that the old-time quilt-maker needed a protractor or any knowledge of arithmetic, for the results could be readily obtained by folding and cutting paper patterns. The effectiveness of this simple pattern relies on the careful selection of tone values. Where three pieces come together, as shown by the darker outline in the diagram, one is always dark and two are lighter, with one of these usually quite light and the other medium. When the dark diamonds are placed in line point-to-point a curious optical effect results. It has been quilted in lozenge and chevron patterns.



Gift of Miss Helena Daly. 963.129.2.
L. 234 cm (92.5″). W. 194 cm (76.5″).

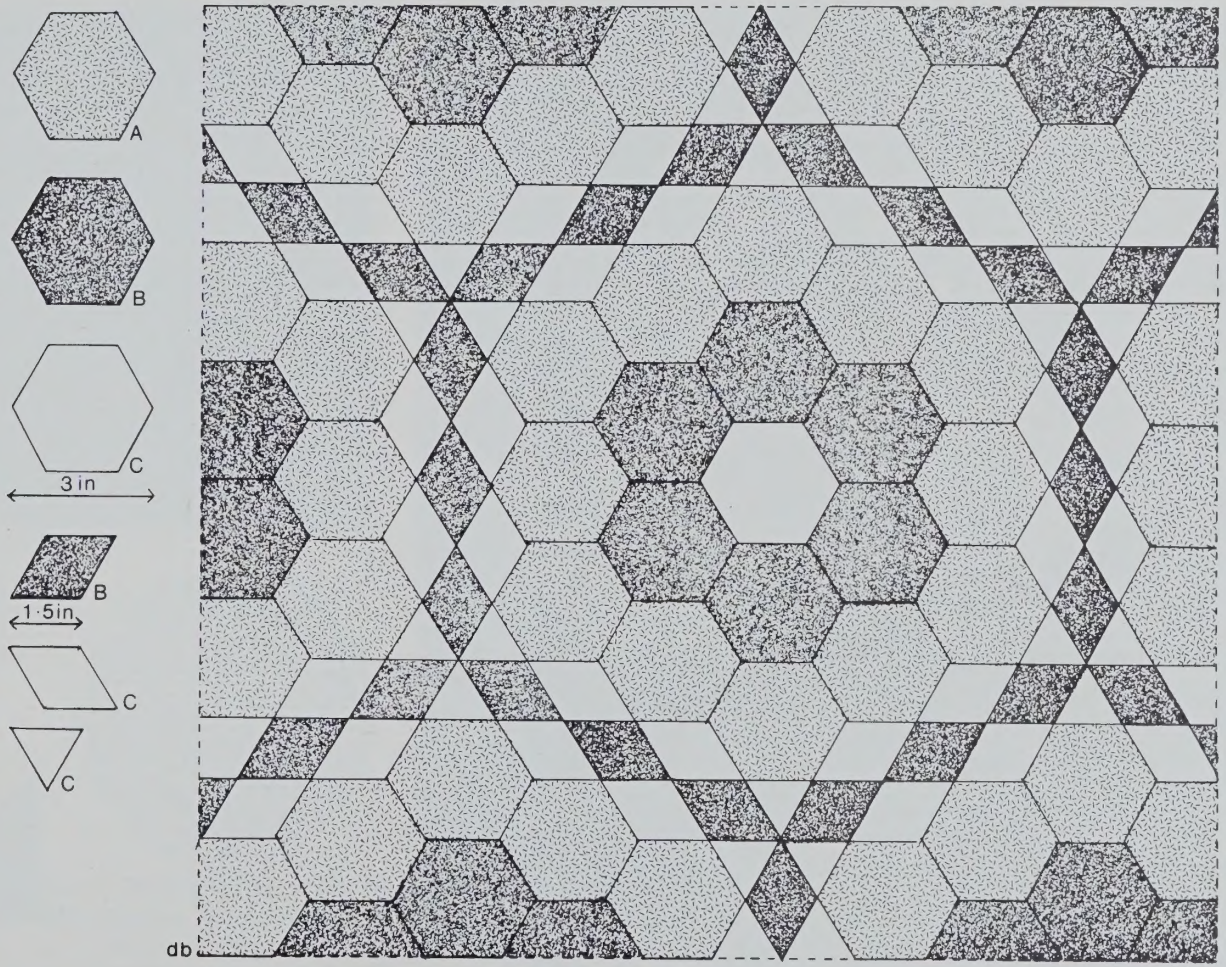


21

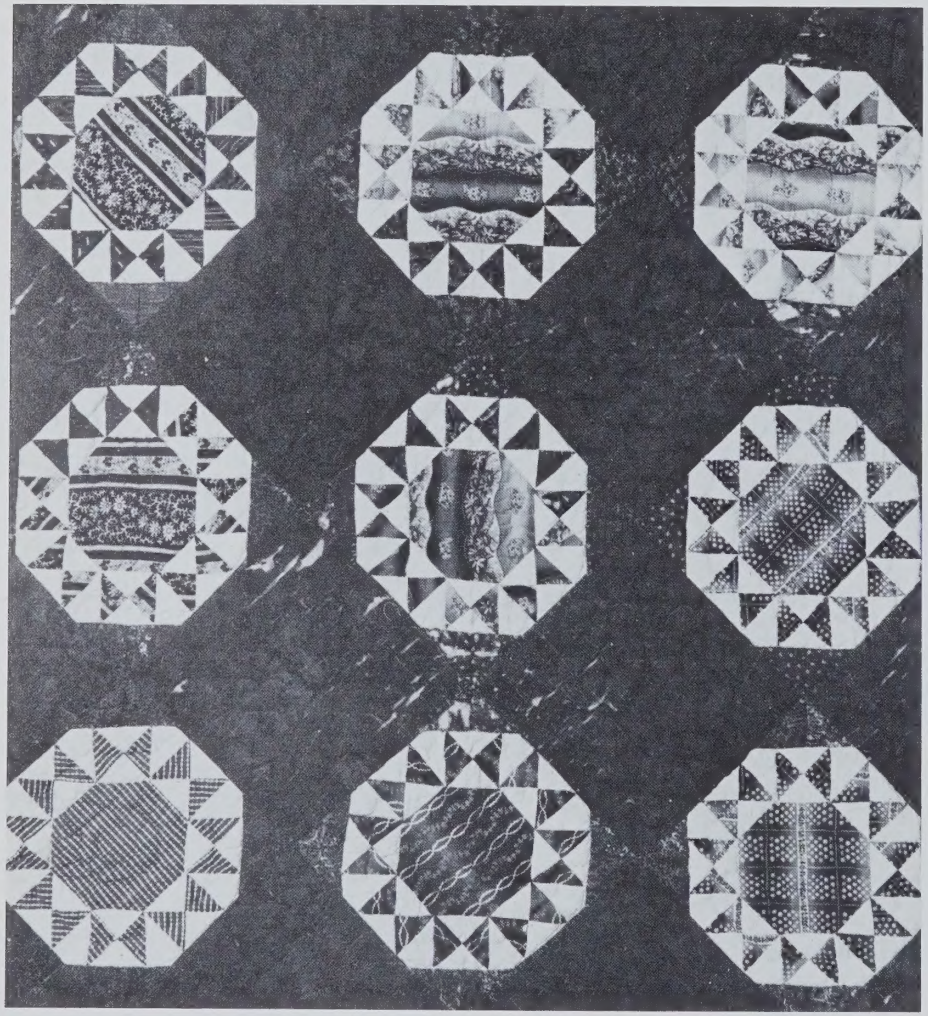
This fresh, attractive, and beautifully sewn quilt was made in Peel County about 1860. Designs based on hexagons are in the English tradition of quilt-making and when found here in Canada are usually made in the manner of English quilts, with each piece basted over a paper pattern before joining by careful top sewing on the wrong side. Sometimes the papers are left in place and sometimes removed, as in this quilt, before backing and quilting. Two unfinished pieces in the ROM collections indicate the usual method of constructing this pattern. A ring of six pieces was made first and then the centre was inserted. Probably a flatter result was obtained this way than was otherwise possible. The engineering of this piece is precise, with the chain of diamonds that is used to separate the motifs filling exactly the same space as a row of hexagons, and the same proportion maintained in the diamond border. Lightly padded and firmly quilted in a shell pattern.

969.225. L. 244 cm (96″). W. 193 cm (76″).

A. Printed cotton with a tiny pink pattern.
B. Printed cotton with a small purple print.
C. Fine plain white cotton.


A
B
C
3 in
B
1·5in
C
C
db

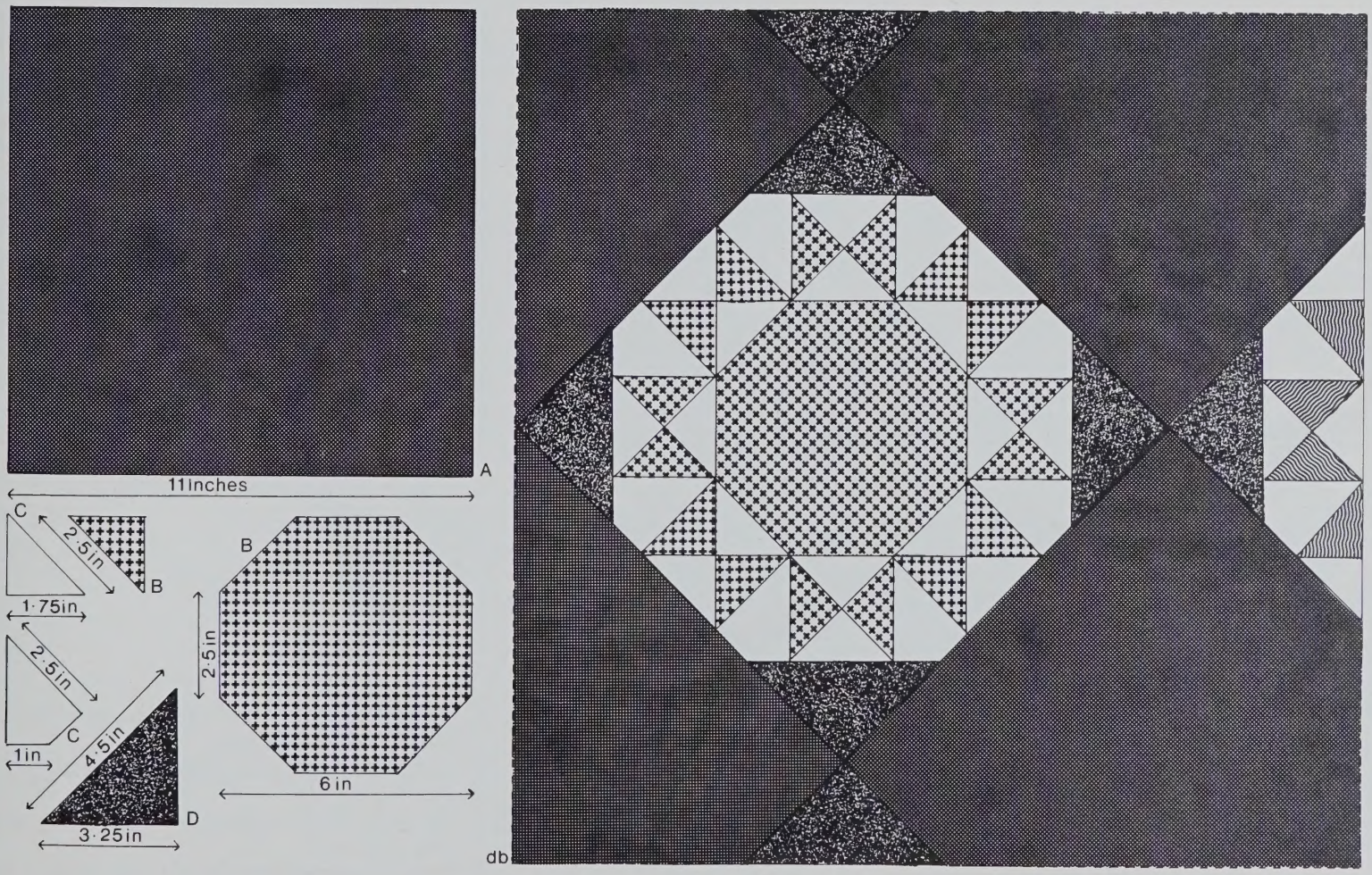
22



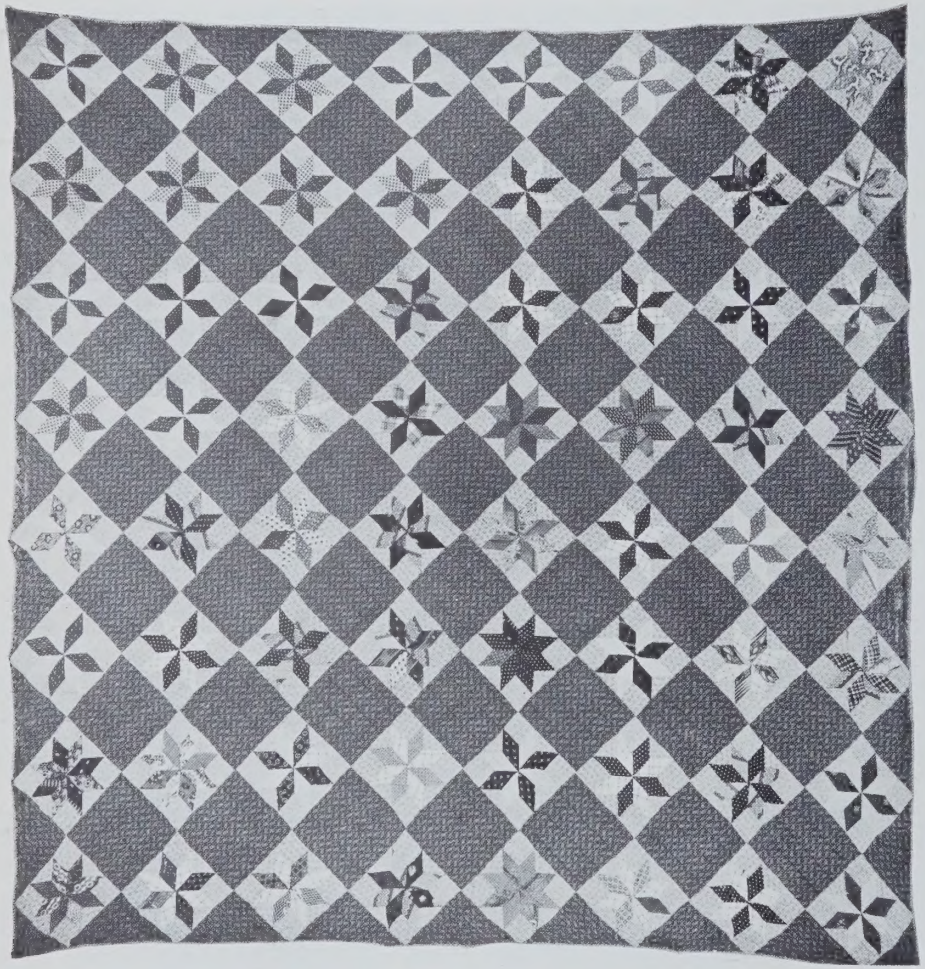
This quilt was inherited by the donor from her great-grandmother Beamer and was probably made about the middle of the nineteenth century in Rockway, Lincoln County. The pattern has an octagon surrounded by a border of triangles, and the block is finished out to a square by the addition of a triangle at each corner. These triangles are almost the same dark colour as the alternate plain blocks spacing the lighter octagons widely on a dark background. The quilt is backed with sugar sacking and heavily filled with cotton to make a warm winter bed covering. The pieced squares are quilted in concentric octagons and the set with diagonal lines.

Gift of Miss Marion Houston. 968.286.2.
L. 212 cm (84″). W. 177 cm (70″).

A. Dark purple printed cotton.
B. Quite bright printed cottons which vary from one motif to another.
C. Natural white cotton.
D. Purple printed cotton that blends with A.


A
11 inches
C
2·5in
B
1·75in
2·5in
C
1in
4·5in
D
3·25in
B
2·5in
6 in
db

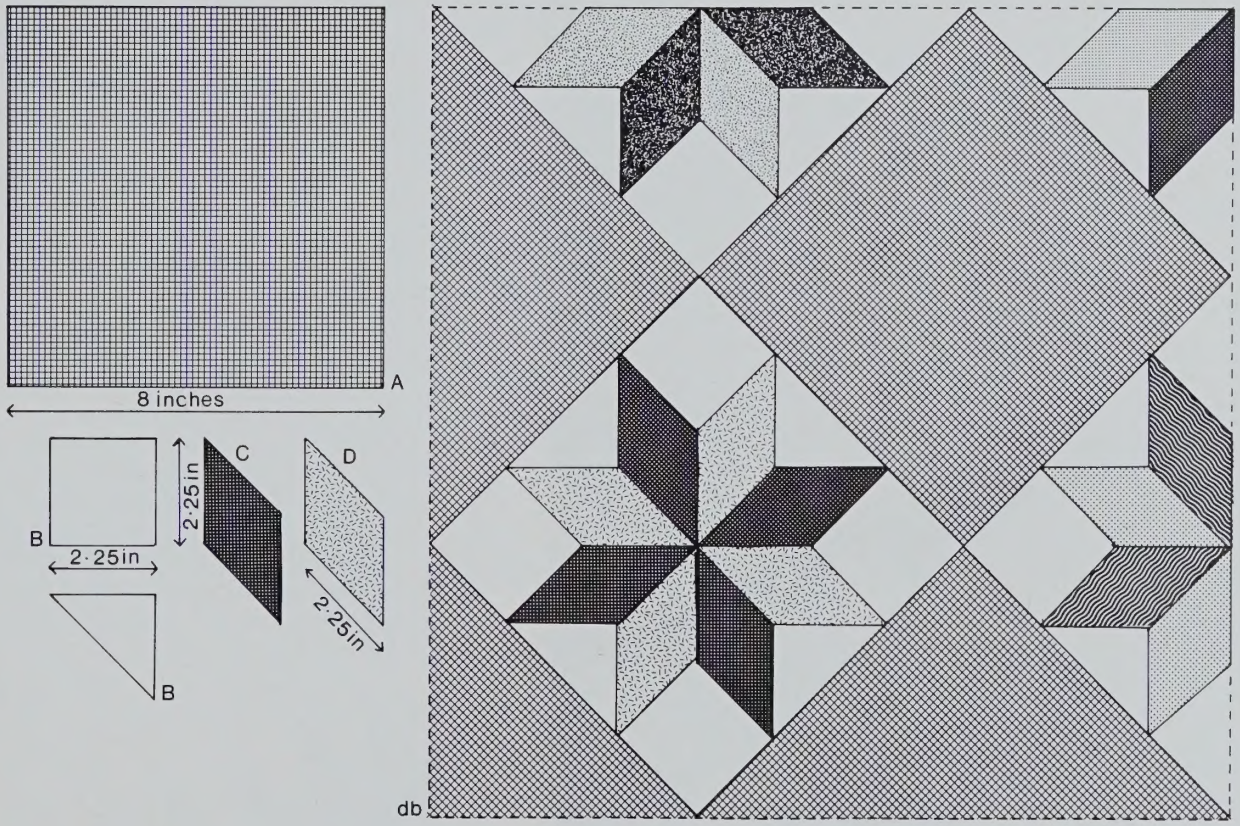
23



This attractive quilt was made in the Penetanguishene area, Simcoe County, some time between about 1850 and 1860. It has an interesting selection of printed cottons that show what was available in rural Ontario at that time. The eight-pointed star is a basic design motif in many cultures; it is adaptable to all techniques of simple embroidery and weaving and equally flexible when used in the piecing of quilts. There are many simple ways of folding paper to produce patterns for quilt pieces. An eight-pointed star can readily be obtained by folding a square of the required size four times to the central point, then taking the corner and folding it back towards the centre, and cutting across the wedge of folded paper along the line that the corner point reaches. The quilt has a cotton bat and is backed with printed cotton.

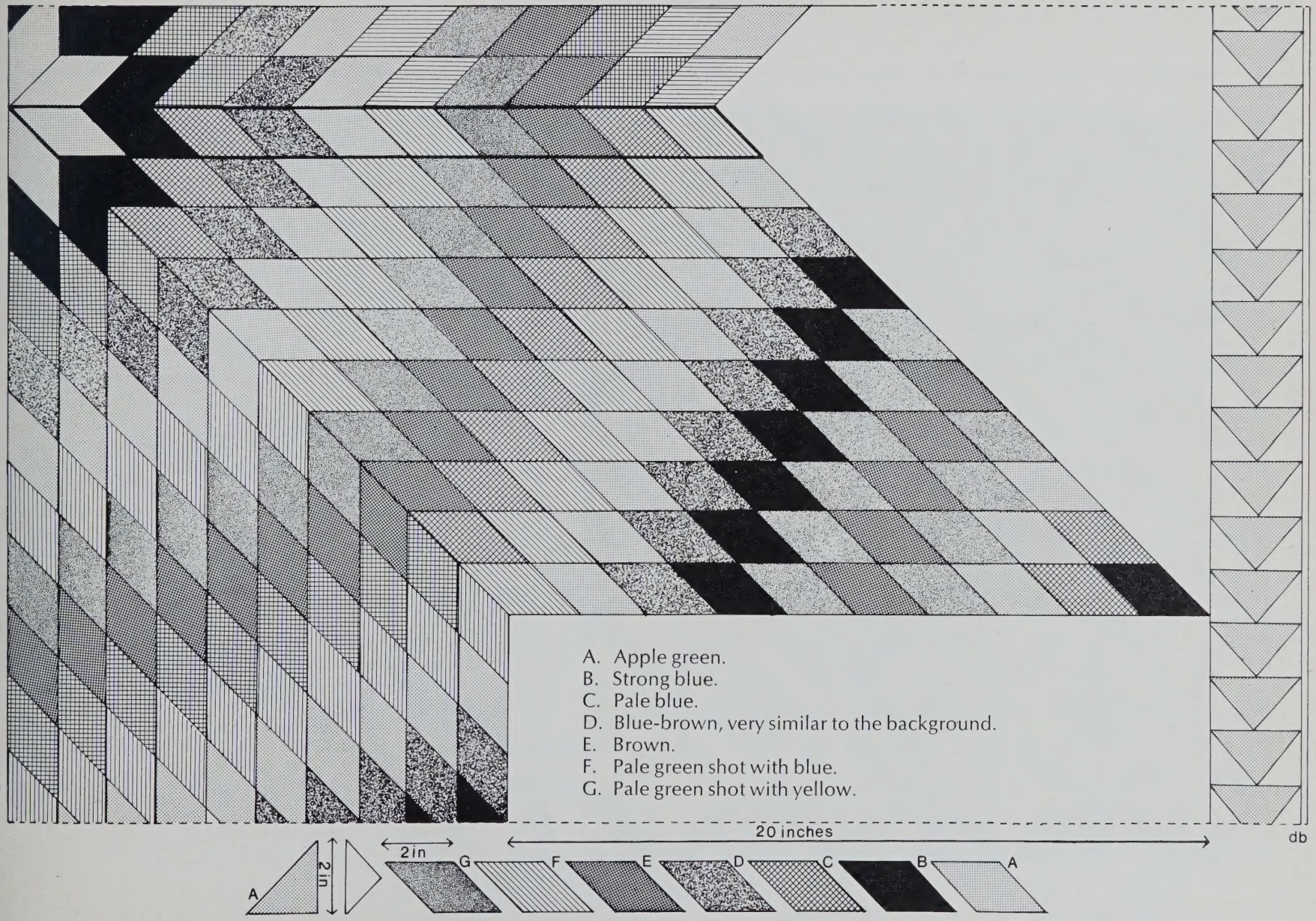
Gift of Mrs. John Roderick. 967.169.
213 cm (84″) square.

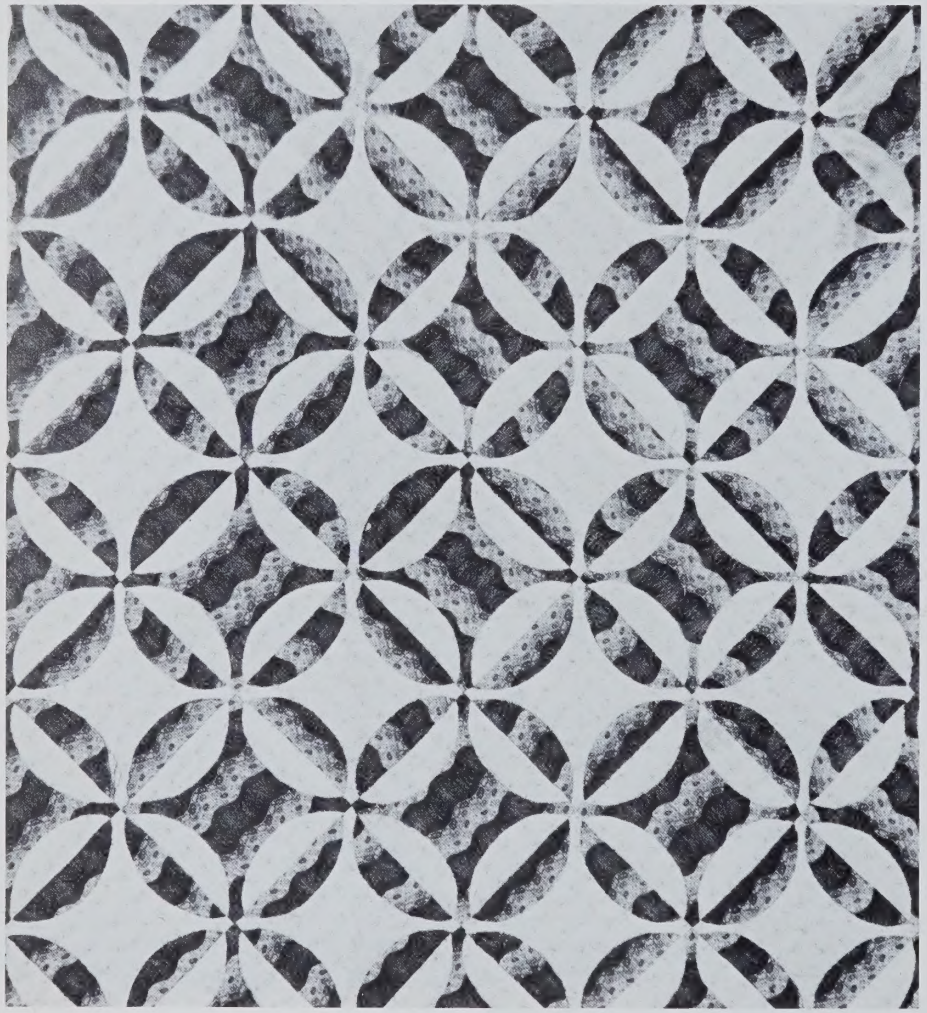
A. Printed green cotton with a small design in black, yellow, and blue.
B. Cotton with a deep yellow ground and a small printed pattern.
C. Printed cottons varying from star to star, mostly of a dark tone.
D. Printed cottons varying from star to star, mostly of a light tone.


A
8 inches
B
2·25in
C
2·25in
D
2·25in
B
db

This sophisticated and lovely quilt was made by Janet Murray (Mrs. Hugh Martin) in Clanbrasil, Haldimand County, probably about 1865, from taffeta dress silks of the type that were used for the wide crinoline dresses of the 1850's and early 1860's. The design shows what can be done with a simple eight-pointed star motif when it is increased in size. On the diagram one row of diamonds is outlined with a heavy line to show the way the construction was started. A row of diamonds of different colours was joined, then another row was made, dropping off the colour at the left of the row, repeating the rest of the colour sequence exactly, and adding a new colour at the right. This row was then joined to the first one and the process repeated again, dropping the left hand diamond and adding a new colour at the right. Work was continued in this way until a large balanced diamond was made. Eight of these were joined to make the large eight-pointed star, with colours radiating out in concentric circles. The quilt has a light padding of soft wool and is backed with fine dark printed cotton; the corners are exquisitely quilted in silk with rosette patterns on a lattice ground, while the star is quilted unnoticeably along the diamond piecing.

Gift of Mrs. Edward Martin Stubbs. 974.67.
L. 215 cm (85″). W. 203 cm (80″).


A. Apple green.
B. Strong blue.
C. Pale blue.
D. Blue-brown, very similar to the background.
E. Brown.
F. Pale green shot with blue.
G. Pale green shot with yellow.
20 inches
db
2 in
2 in
A
G
F
E
D
C
B
A

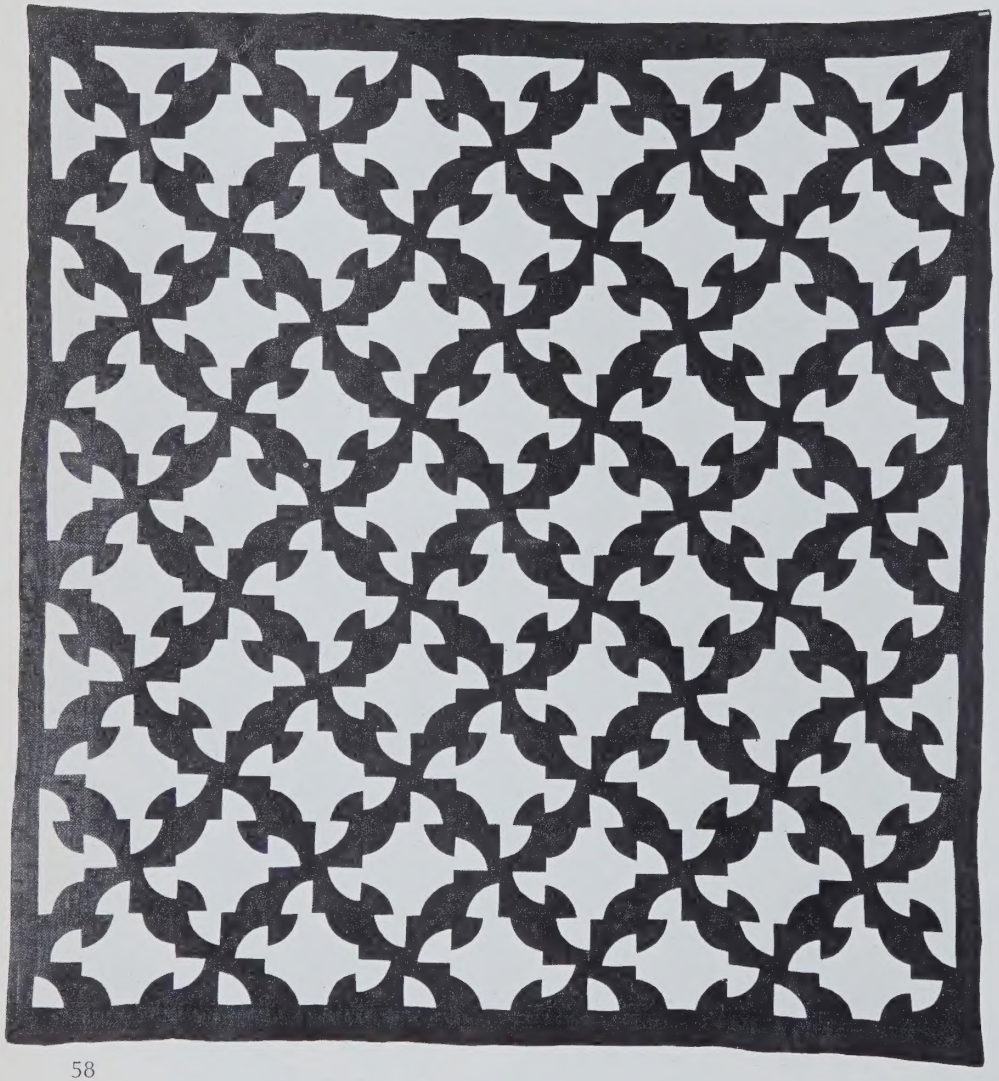


This quilt was made by Charlotte Hamil Davis about 1854 near Stoney Creek in Wentworth County. The patterns so far described have been based on straight lines, but there are many popular designs using curved pieces. In the diagram, one unit is heavily outlined, to show that what appears to be a complex design of interlacing circles is actually two square blocks in alternate colours; each square has a bite taken from its four sides, and the bite is replaced by the other colour of material. This is a well-known type of pattern, sometimes called "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul", because what is cut away can be used to fill out the adjacent block in the reversed colour scheme. Theoretically there is no material wasted, but this theorizing forgets the necessary seam allowance, and by the time this is added the pieces do not cut to nearly as good advantage. It is noticeable, however, in examining old quilts that the makers, with their fine, closely sewn hand seaming, did not find it necessary to leave as large seams as most modern workers. In this case the maker placed her two pieces together with an absolute minimum of overlap and a consequent saving of material. It is made of printed cotton with wavy stripes of blue and brown running in all directions, and of white cotton with a small scattered spot print. It is padded and simply quilted.

Gift of Miss Hattie I. and Miss Charlotte Jones.
972.399.1. L. 212 cm (84"). W. 179 cm (70.5").

db

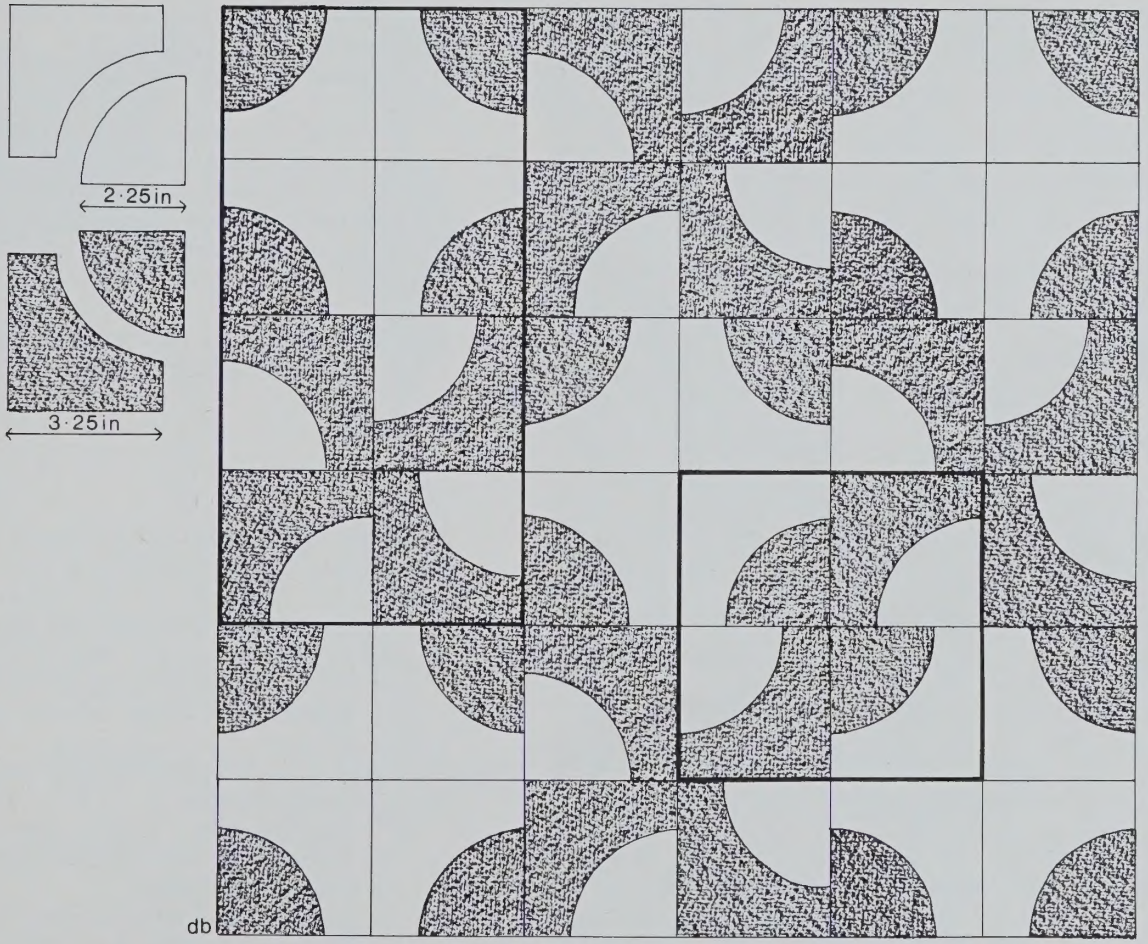
26

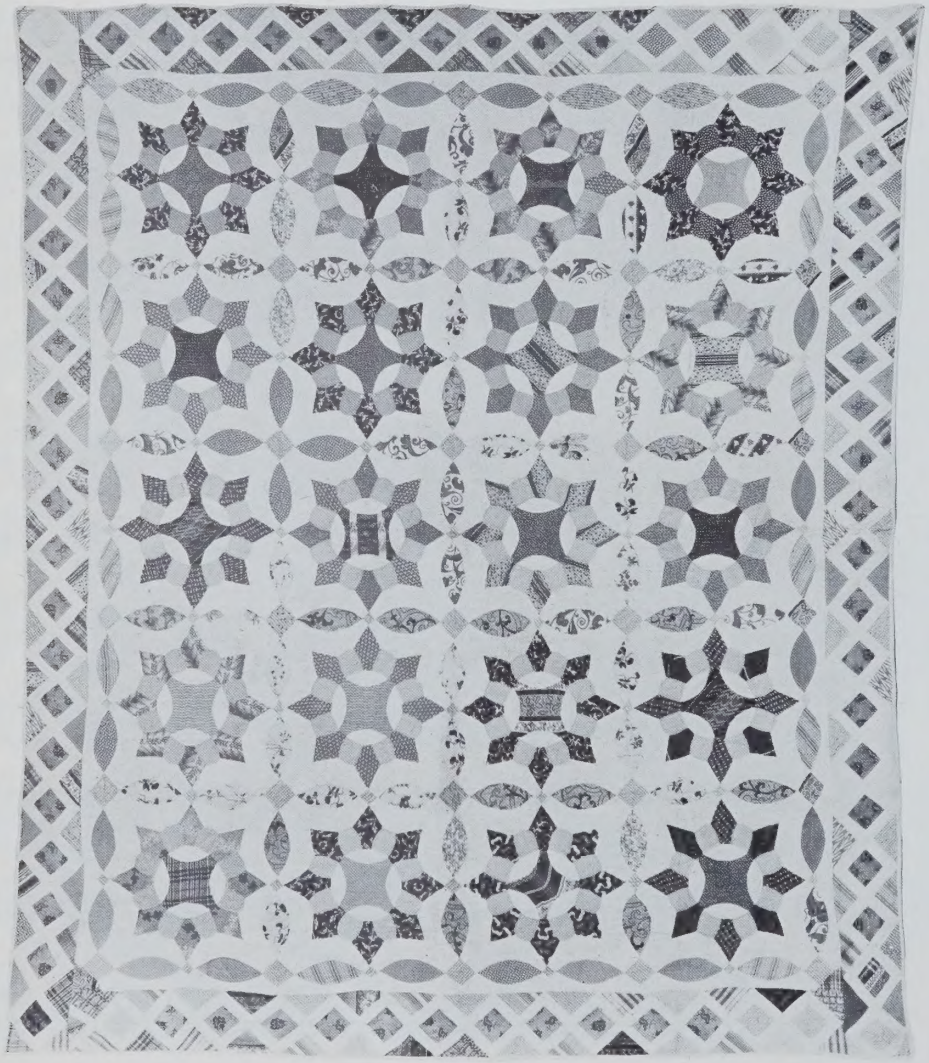


This quilt from Stevensville, Welland County, was made about 1900. It is a well-known pattern of the "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul" type, for obvious reasons often called "The Drunkard's Path", and is a very clever piece of design. There are ways of arranging the pieces to form other patterns, but this is the most effective and the most usual form. It is difficult to grasp the structure of the pattern. To the left in the diagram, two blocks, each consisting of four units, have been heavily outlined; and if these two blocks are arranged in rows in half-drop repeat, the irregular lattice results. To the right in the diagram a different single block, also made of four units, has been outlined, and this is the basic block that has been used in putting together this particular quilt. It has been repeated in offset rows with every second block given a half turn, and again, quite simply, has resulted in the complex drunken paths crossing each other.

The quilt is in red cotton printed with a tiny lattice pattern and in plain white cotton. It is lightly padded, backed with pieced stripes of bright red and white cotton, and quilted along the lines of piecing. The sewing of the curved lines has been done by hand, but all straight seaming has been done by machine.

Gift of Mr. James B. Burnham. 970.251.
L. 192 cm (72.5"). W. 176 cm (69.5").


2·25in
3·25in
db

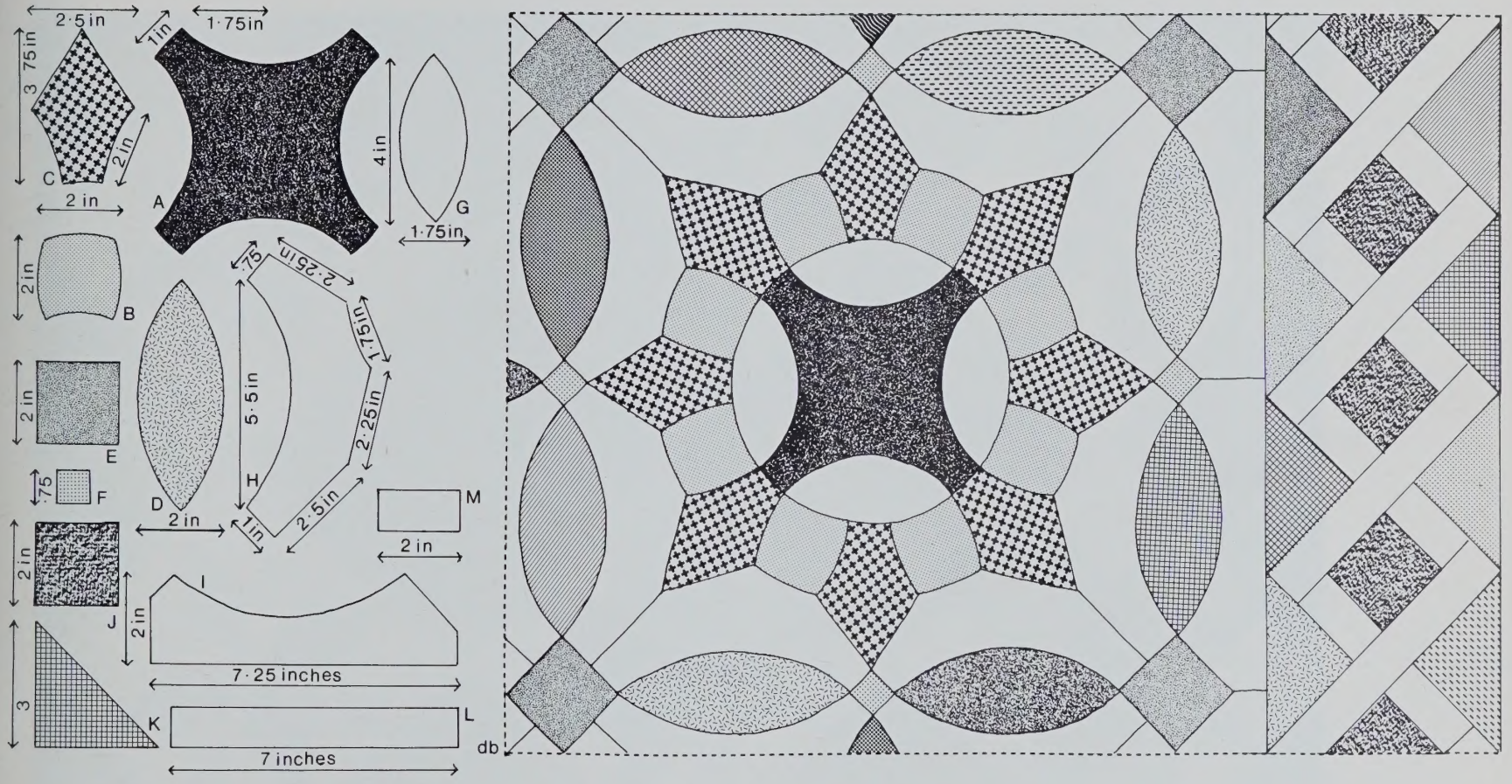


This quilt is associated with a wedding in Belleville, Hastings County, about 1840. The difficult pattern has been put together from varied plain and printed cottons, obviously drawn from left-over scraps of material, on a plain white ground. The care with which the colour distribution has been made and the excellence in all aspects of the piecing, sewing, and quilting make a truly outstanding quilt which might well be considered a work of art and a fitting finale for this series.

Gift of Mrs. C. D. McPherson. 969.188.2.
L. 232 cm (91.5″). W. 196 cm (77.5″).

Material is used consistently within individual circles but varies from circle to circle.

A. Centres, fairly strong, dark prints.
B. Circles, pink, either plain or printed.
C. Points, mainly purple, sometimes brown.
D. Segments in lattice, varying prints, usually in browns.
E. Squares at lattice corners, varying small prints, usually purple.
F. Small squares in lattice, a tiny blue print.
G. Segments in centre circle, white.
H. Background, white.
I. Background where border joins pattern, white.
J. Squares in border, varying brown prints.
K. Triangles in border, varying brown prints.
L.–M. Strapping in border, white.


2·5 in
1 in
1·75 in
3·75 in
2 in
C
A
4 in
G
1·75 in
2 in
2 in
B
·75
2·25 in
1·75 in
2 in
5·5 in
E
2·25 in
·75
F
H
D
2 in
1 in
2·5 in
M
2 in
2 in
I
J
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7·25 inches
3
K
L
7 inches
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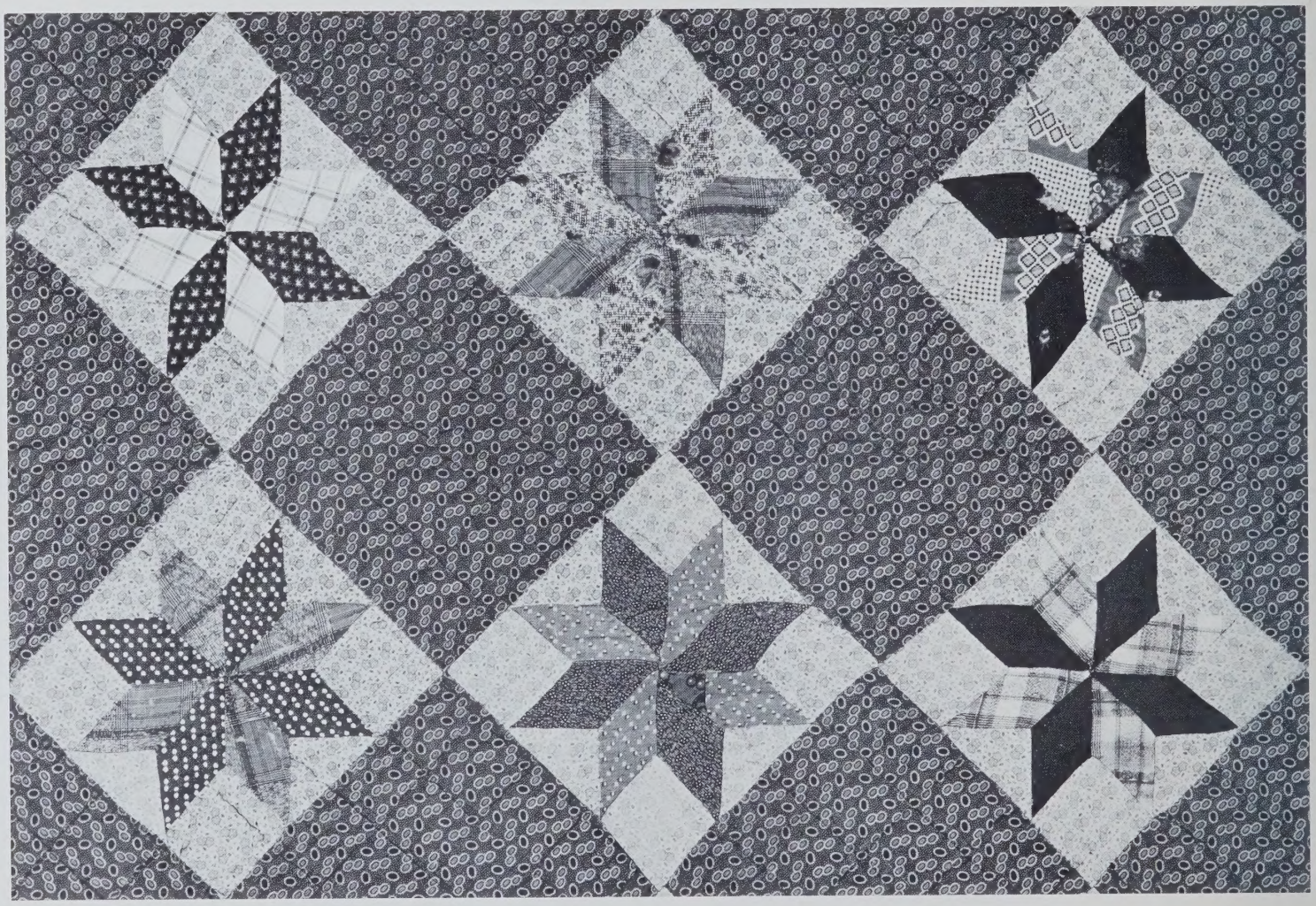
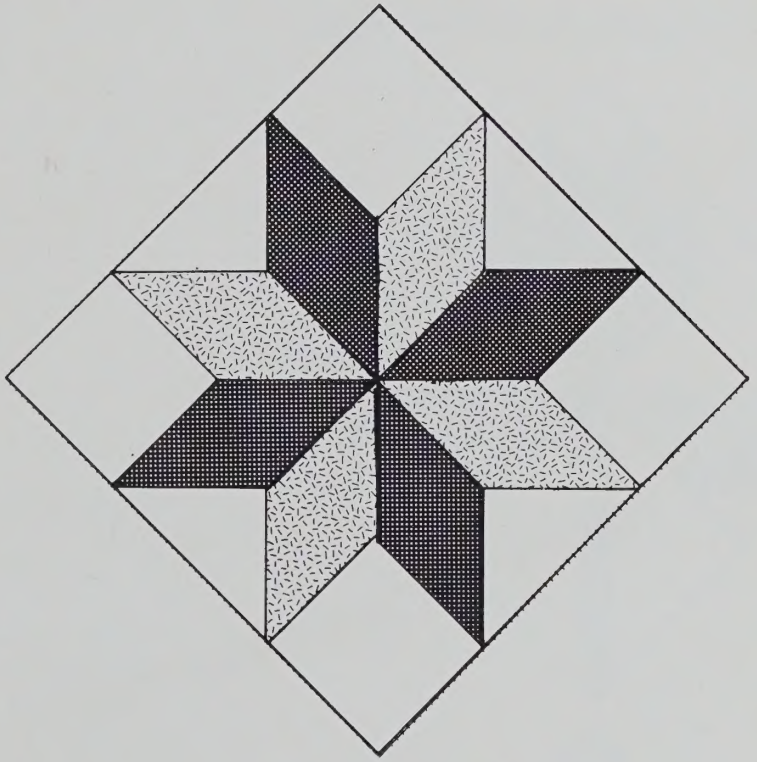




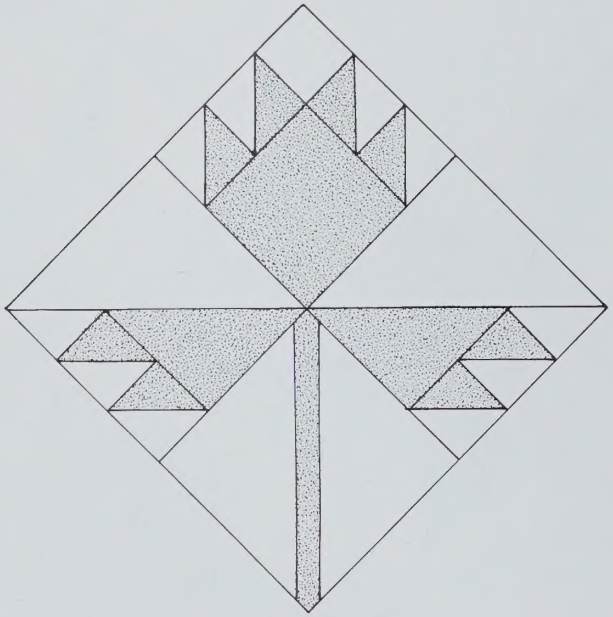
Detail of Quilt 23

Detail of Diagram 23

Design: Virginia Morin, ROM Information Services

Photography: ROM — Leighton Warren, William Robertson, Brian Boyle

Printed and bound in Canada by the Hunter Rose Company



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